Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

75¢

PUA 2.0 claimants to see payments. PAGE 3

DCRM assesses $6K penalty vs GPPC/K-Parts. PAGE 6

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TUESDAY MARCH 23, 2021
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SKATEPARK MAKEOVER
Staff and members of the House of Representatives minority bloc work on giving the Garapan Skate Park a makeover. The area was water-blasted, repainted with a marine life theme, and new solar lights will soon be installed. The project started yesterday and is expected to be completed by this Friday.

NEIL FAMA

Story on Page 2

DFEMS stands pat: Get vaccinated

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services is putting its foot down in requiring all its personnel to be vaccinated against COVID-19, saying those who continue to refuse to be vaccinated will "face adverse action."

See DFEMS on Page 4

Guam reports 7 cases of COVID-19 variant

By JUSTITNE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Guam now has seven cases of the California COVID-19 variant, which is 20% more transmissible.

Speaking in a live Facebook video, Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero said yesterday that of the seven cases, four were identified in the community, with no known travel history. The other three were from samples collected in quarantine.

According to Felix T. Cabrera, internal medicine doctor at Guam Regional Medical City, the samples were taken from Jan. 13 to Jan. 28 and don't have the U.K., South African, or Brazil variants. Ca-

See GUAM on Page 4

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

USCIS jettisons public charge rule

The Public Charge Final Rule that the Trump Administration put into effect in weighing immigration applications in 2019 is no longer in effect.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has announced it has stopped applying the Public Charge Final Rule to all pending applications and petitions starting last March 9, 2021. Instead, USCIS will go back to the previous policy. At the same time, intending immigrants

See USCIS on Page 4

Borja-Arriola

Torres fires OVR director Borja-Arriola

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres has terminated Maryann Borja-Arriola as director of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

In the letter he issued last Thursday, Torres said that Borja-Arriola, who was appointed to her post, serves at the pleasure of the governor and that he has decided to terminate her from her post, effective immediately.

As of press time yesterday, *Saipan Tribune* was still trying to obtain comments from Borja-Arriola.

See TORRES on Page 4

AT A GLANCE

As of 7pm, March 22, 2021

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,780	4	7,784
Recovered	7,618	5	7,623
Active	23	4	27
Deaths	134	0	134
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			137,351

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	157	0	157
Traced via Travel Screening	121	0	121
Traced via Community Screening	36	0	36
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			26,131*
Days since last community transmission			6

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Saipan:	Tinian:	Rota:
Dose 1: 12,741	Dose 1: 820	Dose 1: 939
Dose 2: 9,515	Dose 2: 370	Dose 2: 511

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted not to report active and recovered cases.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

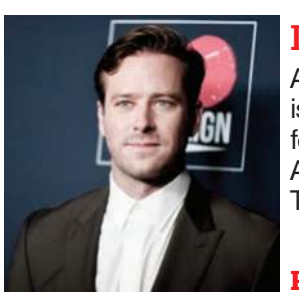
INSIDE

BUSINESS
Ocean Star Restaurant taps into the early bird market by offering breakfast meals.

PAGE 11

NATION
The first three months of the U.S. vaccination rollout suggest that faster is not necessarily better.

PAGE 12



LIFE & STYLE
Actor Armie Hammer is under investigation for sexual assault, Los Angeles police said Thursday.

PAGE 15

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

Members of the House of Representatives minority bloc and their staff pose for a souvenir photo yesterday, March 22, while working to revamp the Garapan Skate Park.
NEIL FAMA

Garapan Skate Park gets a makeover

By NEIL FAMA
neil_fama@saipantribune
REPORTER

Members of the House of Representatives minority bloc and their staff began their Precinct 3 project yesterday to give the Garapan Skate Park a makeover.

Minority bloc spokesman Rep. Angel Demapan (R-Saipan) said the project is in line with their efforts to focus on outdoor activities, health and wellness, and camaraderie among the younger crowd. "We're here and we hope that they appreciate the makeover we're doing today."

The idea of revamping the skatepark came from the Saipan skating community itself. A member of the skating community, who is a skater himself, reportedly approached the minority lawmakers, requesting that they make some improvements to the skatepark.

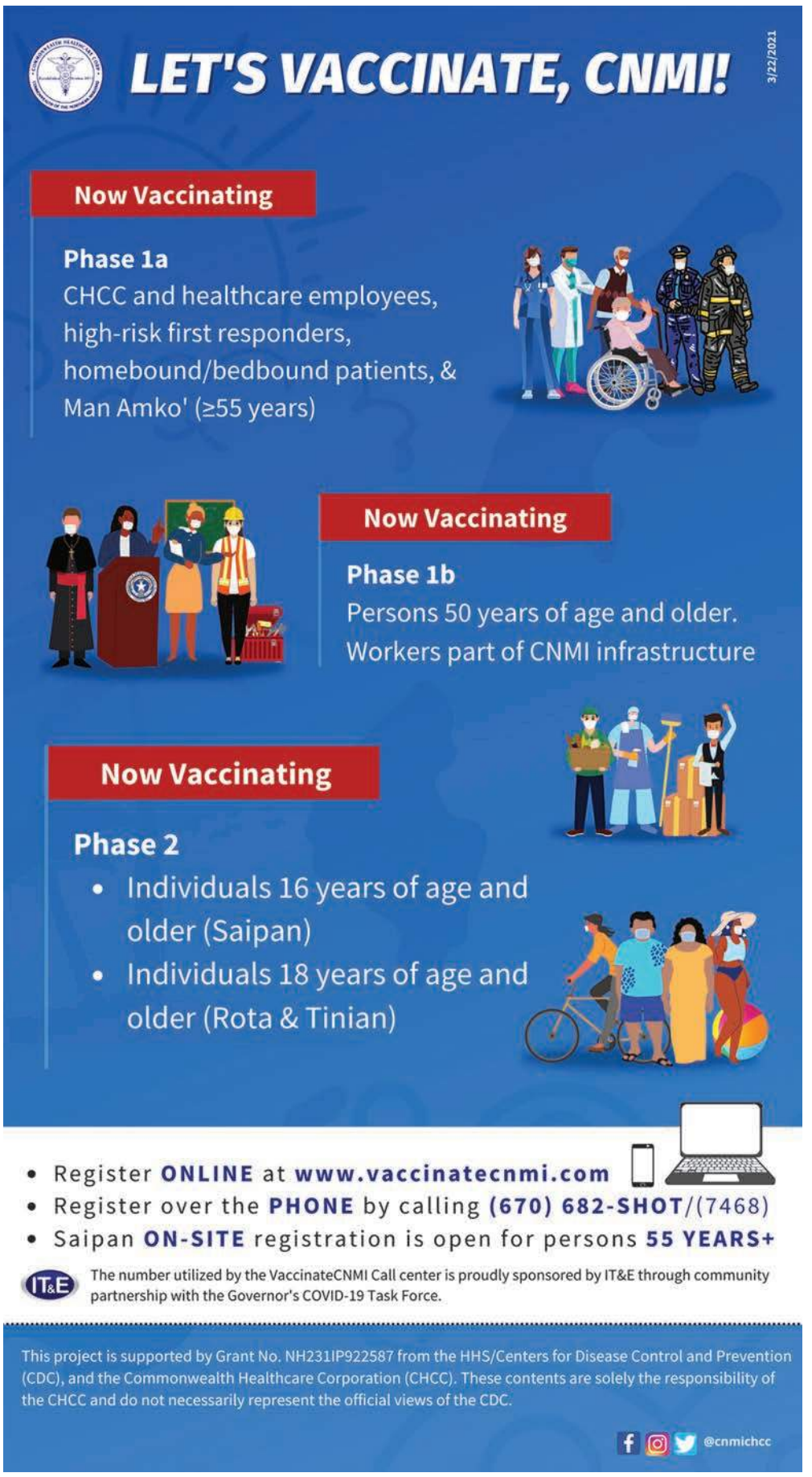
"We came and assessed the site and we had some ideas to do a marine life theme so what you can see here is a large octopus coming out of the ocean, and then we have a sea turtle on this side. The whole concrete area is going to be filled up with the marine life theme. And we hope that...we also bring awareness to the community about the importance of being responsible stewards of our environment, in this case, our ocean," Demapan said.

One of the requests was to have more skating rink equipment. Unfortunately, Demapan said, they don't have access to that kind of equipment on island. "We're just going to do some visual improvements, and hopefully that brings some joy to the people who utilize the area."

The skatepark lights are also not working and new solar lights will be installed later. "The vendor that provides the specific wattage of solar lights is currently out of stock, but the team will come back to it once they are back in stock."

Demapan credited the Tan Siu Lin Foundation for its part in the Public Private Partnership program, the Office of the Mayor of Saipan, and the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services, and an anonymous donor who helped with this project.

The project will be put on hold for today due to a scheduled House session, but will continue shortly afterwards. The renovation is intended to be completed by Friday, March 26.


LET'S VACCINATE, CNMI!
3/22/2021
Now Vaccinating
Phase 1a
CHCC and healthcare employees,
high-risk first responders,
homebound/bedbound patients, &
Man Amko' (≥55 years)
Now Vaccinating
Phase 1b
Persons 50 years of age and older.
Workers part of CNMI infrastructure
Now Vaccinating
Phase 2
• Individuals 16 years of age and older (Saipan)
• Individuals 18 years of age and older (Rota & Tinian)
• Register ONLINE at www.vaccinatecnmi.com
• Register over the PHONE by calling (670) 682-SHOT/(7468)
• Saipan ON-SITE registration is open for persons 55 YEARS+
IT&E
The number utilized by the VaccinateCNMI Call center is proudly sponsored by IT&E through community partnership with the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force.
This project is supported by Grant No. NH231IP922587 from the HHS/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC). These contents are solely the responsibility of the CHCC and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC.
@cnmichcc

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Secretary of Public Works
2nd Floor Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan, MP 96950

NOTICE TO ADJACENT LANDOWNERS ALONG CHALAN TUN HERMAN PAN (AIRPORT ROAD, ROUTE 35)

CRM APPLICATION NO: SMS-2000-X-142-A1
PROJECT: ROUTE 35 ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (CHALAN TUN HERMAN PAN - AIRPORT ROAD)
APPLICANT: DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW)

The Department of Public Works (DPW) is proposing to improve 4,100 feet of Route 35 (Tun Herman Pan/Airport Road) in Dandan, Saipan beginning from the intersection of Isa Drive and Route 35 (identified as Station 4+00) to the intersection of Exploring Drive and Route 34 (Station 45+00). The Route 35 Improvement Project is intended to eliminate hazards on the roadway and improve drainage. The proposed improvements would involve reconstruction of the existing roadway and upgrading of the pavement structure which includes excavation, backfilling of sub-base and base courses, asphaltic concrete pavement, dense graded anti-skid pavement, pavement markings, permanent traffic signs, driveway connections and connection to drainage chambers.

PROJECT BACKGROUND
In 2003, a Major Siting Permit (Coastal Permit No. SMS-2000-X-142) was issued to DPW for the construction and surface improvements of approximately 7,100 feet of two lanes (12 to 18 feet wide) with class II bike lanes (4 to 8 feet wide), and drainage improvements for Route 35 (Tun Herman Pan/Airport Road) Improvement Project in Dandan, Saipan. This permit authorized the construction beginning from Station 45+00 to 79+00 as indicated in the permit application and plans, except that repairs and resurfacing may be completed between Stations 2+00 and 45+00.

The public hearing for this project is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, April 6, 2021, at 5:00 to 7:00 PM at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center, on Beach Road in Susupe, Saipan. COVID-19 protocols will be implemented and all participants are required to wear a face masks at all times.

Written comments can be submitted by mail to the Division of Coastal Resources Management, P.O. Box 501304, sent by fax to 664-8315, or emailed to permitting@dcrm.gov.mp. Please contact the DCRM at 664-8300 if you have any questions or would like to learn more about the Route 35 Road Improvement project.

/s/ JAMES A. ADA
Secretary
Department of Public Works

PROPOSED ROUTE 35 (TUN HERMAN PAN ROAD) IMPROVEMENTS
FROM STATION 4+00 (ROUTE 31 ISA DRIVE) TO 45+50 (EXPLORING DRIVE)

PUA 2.0 claimants to see payments

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Claimants for the second round of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance/Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation should be expecting checks soon, according to CNMI Labor Secretary Vicky Benavente.

Speaking at the governor's media briefing last March 19, Benavente said that claimants should have been expecting payments since last March 22.

"We have been printing checks for the second round of PUA and we hope to get the majority out by Monday. …The payment batches that were printed includes all of February 2021 and the first two weeks of March. We are pushing out those payments through direct deposit and through paper checks in the next few days," said Benavente.

For those who filed for PUA 2.0 through paper applications, Benavente said the staff at the PUA headquarters have been processing them since last March 15, the last day to have submit a PUA application.

Benavente added that it will be a tedious process to input all applications from paper to computer since "a thousand were received on the same day." Despite this, Benavente assured that each application has a date stamp and each file is assigned to a case worker. This process will allow the case workers to work as quickly as they can.

Benavente said there are more than 100 people who are working on the PUA program. As of March 19, Benavente said that there are more than 10,000 applicants for PUA 2.0.

As for the first round, Benavente said that those who have not received funds from the first round definitely have some problems with documents. She suggested that applicants should call in to see what the problem is.

"We have come across some people who were actually informed about the issue of the application but didn't understand it. …If the applicant doesn't understand why their application was rejected or disqualified…please give us a call," said Benavente.

NMC resumes face-to-face classes

Northern Marianas College resumed its face-to-face classes, including other classes that have a face-to-face element, yesterday, March 22, 2021.

In an email from NMC Accreditation liaison officer Charlotte Cepeda, students were all informed that, while are on campus, they must observe all safety protocols, including wearing a mask at all times, keeping socially distant, and practicing proper hygiene, including washing hands properly or sanitizing.

Students were urged to notify NMC is there are other reasons that may prevent them from participating in face-to-face classes.

While NMC Student Service offices are open, no prior appointments are necessary; however, all COVID-19 protocols must be followed such as wearing a mask at all times, keeping socially distant, and practicing proper hygiene. Students are required to take their temperatures and sign in at every office or department that they visit.

NMC strongly encourages its students to get vaccinated. It pointed out that vaccine registration for those who are 16 years old or older (Saipan) and those who are 18 years old and older (Tinian and Rota) are now being accepted. For vaccination and registration questions, call (670) 682-SHOT /7468, or you can visit www.vaccinatecnmi.com for more information.

However, for students who are part of a COVID-19 active contact tracing process or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, they are being encouraged to stay home.

"The situation and the news regarding COVID-19 are always evolving. The information we share today may be updated in days or even within hours. Some of the timelines we identify may change depending on circumstances that emphasize student and employee safety and wellbeing," said Cepeda in the email. ***(Neil Fama)***

PSS going back to blended learning

The CNMI Public School System will be going back to blended learning starting Monday, March 29, 2021.

In an announcement yesterday, parents were asked to refer to their child(ren's) blended learning schedule that was given prior to the 14-day self-quarantine that took place due to the recent community cases that were identified a few weeks ago.

The blended learning schedule can be accessed at: http://bit.ly/pss_blendedlearning

According to PSS, the safety of PSS staff and families are a high priority and PSS will continue to monitor any community spread that impacts students.

In relation to this, PSS assured that schools will ensure daily sanitizing of classrooms, enforce social distancing indoor and outdoor, temperature checks will be conducted and documented, face masks and/or face shields will be required at all times for students, staff and visitors, and classrooms will be retrofitted to meet safety measures.

"This transition back to blended learning is a testament to the work of PSS and the COVID-19 task force," said Marianas High School principal Jonathan Aguon. "Last year when we encountered the pandemic…we just didn't have the tech yet. Now we have the MiFi devices and other equipment that will help with the transition." ***(Neil Fama)***

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House leaders throw strongly support Kilili's Insular Area Medicaid Parity Act

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The leadership of the CNMI House of Representatives has thrown its support for the Insular Area Medicaid Parity Act that Delegate Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan (Ind-MP) introduced.

The letter of support, dated March 16, was submitted to U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce chair Rep. Frank Pallone, U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health chair Rep. Anna Eschoo, and two other ranking members of the Committee.

The letter was signed by House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan), vice speaker Rep. Blas Jonathan T. Attao (R-Saipan), floor leader Rep. Ralph N. Yumul (R-Saipan), Committee on Health and Welfare chair Rep. Christina E. Sablan (D-Saipan), Committee on Ways and Means chair Rep. Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota), and Committee on Federal and Foreign Affairs chair Rep. Vicente Camacho (D-Saipan).

Villagomez

Sablan

The U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce Committee, Health Subcommittee had a hearing last week about delegate Sablan's legislation.

The CNMI House leaders said in the letter that CNMI citizens and millions of fellow Americans residing in U.S. insular areas have long faced chronic underfunding of Medicaid and that an impending Medicaid "fiscal cliff" jeopardizes access to critically needed health care.

They said delegate Sablan H.R. 265 corrects that serious inequity by lifting the cap on general Medicaid funding to the territories that is set forth in the Social Security Act.

They said the major disparity between Medicaid in the territories and Medicaid in the United States is in the financial treatment, as highlighted in recent reports to U.S. Congress by the Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission.

The leaders said that, unlike the states, statutory annual ceilings apply to Medicaid funding in the territories regardless of changes in enrollment or services.

They said caps of Section 1108 of the Social Security Act have resulted in historically insufficient resources to meet the health care needs of Medicaid eligible citizens.

The leaders said another statutory inequity lies in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage, or the matching rate, which for the territories is fixed at 55% federal to 45% non-federal share for most Medicaid expenses.

They said in addition to supporting removal of the Section 118 caps, they recommend that Congress apply to the territories the same FMAP formula that is used for the United States and that takes into account the relative income and poverty levels of the jurisdictions.

"Eliminating the Section 1108 caps and applying an equitable method of determining the FMAP will enable the Medicaid programs in the Northern Marianas and the other territories to provide the same level of care that Medicaid eligible citizens receive in the [United] States, ensure that health care providers are reimbursed appropriately for the services delivered, and allow the Territories to plan and manage the Medicaid programs as the states do," they said.

'Spending plan is fastest way to get $515M to community

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Vice speaker Rep. Blas Jonathan T. Attao (R-Saipan) said last Friday that the Legislature should work on the administration's spending plan as it is the fastest way to get to the community the estimated $515 million that's allocated to the CNMI under the American Rescue Plan.

At the House session, Attao was among the 10 representatives who voted against the passage of House Bill 22-33 that would grant the Legislature appropriation powers over the $515 million in Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund.

"If the administration is going to propose a spending plan, I think that's the angle that we can actually utilize. Take that spending plan. Work on that spending plan," said Attao during discussion of the bill.

The bill eventually scraped a single majority to pass the House and head to the Senate. House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) had to exercise his authority to break the 10-10 tie by voting twice to pass the bill after a long debate last Friday.

Attao said if that money is considered outside source and it does not apply to the CNMI laws and the Constitution, then they can fill in those holes in the spending plan.

"Take away what we think is not important by the administration and act what we believe is important as a body," said Attao, adding that he believes that will be fastest way to be able to get these monies out to the community.

He said if the administration fails to provide a spending plan within the next 60 days, then they (lawmakers) have the power to create these committees to address the issues.

"I cannot support this legislation right now," said Attao.

DFEMS

From Page 1

This comes soon after 23 DFEMS firefighters refused to be inoculated with the COVID-19 vaccine, citing unknown medical risks from taking it as well as arguing that they should be given a choice in the matter without putting their jobs at risk.

In a statement yesterday, DFEMS Commissioner Dennis Mendiola said the governor's directive mandating COVID-19 vaccinations for government employees was reviewed by the Office of the Attorney General and is intended to safeguard the community by mitigating the risk of contracting and transmitting the COVID-19 virus.

He said the decision to make the vaccination mandatory is compliant with the Governor's Directive 2021-002 and that there will be special treatment or no exemption "other than what is outlined in the directive."

"As the commissioner of Fire and EMS, it is my responsibility to ensure that the department renders essential services to our community in a safe and efficient manner while at the same time ensuring that firefighters and EMT alike, are protected. The vaccine is the solution, in addition to the proper protective equipment mandated for their protection," Mendiola said.

He said the original number of 23 firefighters who were refusing to be vaccinated has now dropped to 11 after a meeting last Friday, March 19, 2021. He said most "were deceived by the intent of this movement while others were simply trying to see if there was any way out of vaccinating."

Of the 23 personnel, he said 12 have agreed to be vaccinated, while the remaining 11 personnel will be facing adverse action for failure to comply.

"I am disappointed that these drastic measures have to be taken to ensure compliance when, in fact, officers that have been sworn in as well as first responders should take the initiative themselves to ensure that the people they serve are not in harm's way. I have given the employees much time to think about their course of action and make a decision."

He reminded that when one first responder became a person under investigation, it caused a panic throughout the community. "This hampered our ability to execute our duties. Any time the department responds to 911 calls, the question of whether or not the responders are carriers of the virus is pondered.

During a state of health emergency such as a pandemic, cooperation and compliance are the key to get through the crisis. "If we allow anyone to violate this directive, we risk putting other innocent people in harm's way, and that goes against our duties as first responders," he added.

This comes soon after the DFEMS firefighters created a petition, via Goggle Documents, in which they sought the public's support to give them the choice to take the vaccine without worrying about losing their job. Should they be granted the choice of getting the vaccine, they promised to follow all strict protocols to ensure the safety of the community by wearing proper personal protective equipment, and other safety measures.

Mendiola pointed out, though, that even with those mitigation in place, there is still a possibility to contract the virus.

The firefighters argued in their petition that because Gov. Ralph DLG Torres has repeated that the CNMI is "the safest place in the U.S," they question why the directive is being forced on them.

"We are in a position to choose between keeping our jobs that help us to support and feed our families or lose 10-20+ years of selfless service for simply refusing a vaccine that raises many uncertainties. Worldwide, we still do not know the possible long-term effects this rushed vaccine may cause to our health," said the firefighters.

The firefighters said that they knew the risk of COVID-19 since the pandemic started in March 2020 and they have accepted it while continuing their everyday responsibilities.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission says that equal employment opportunity laws "do not interfere with or prevent employers from following the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] or other federal, state, and local public health authorities' guidance and suggestions." However, there are exceptions that employers must consider before implementing a mandatory vaccination program. This includes having strong religious beliefs or having a medical condition.

USCIS

From Page 1

will no longer need to file a declaration of self-sufficiency when applying to have their immigration status adjusted.

USCIS also removed content related to the vacated 2019 Public Charge Final Rule from affected USCIS forms and has posted updated versions of affected forms.

It will be recalled that the Trump Administration put into effect a public charge rule in 2019 that those applying for a "green card" should not have obtained social services assistance like Medicaid or food stamps. This rule was criticized as a "wealth test" and made it harder for low income immigrants and non-immigrants to seek improved immigration status.

In announcing the change, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said that USCIS will no longer consider a person's receipt of Medicaid (except for Medicaid for long-term institutionalization), public housing, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, also known as food stamps) benefits as part of the public charge inadmissibility determination.

USCIS published new form editions for affected forms. Starting April 19, 2021, it will only accept the March 10, 2021, editions. Until then, you can also use the prior editions specified on each form webpage. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

GUAM

From Page 1

brera said the California COVID-19 variant is 20% more transmittable than the original virus.

He assured, though, that the vaccines Guam has been providing on the island has appears to be effective against the California variant.

Cabrera added that Guam's COVID-19 numbers are very low, which indicates that even with the variant present, the measures being taken in Guam are working. There have been no new COVID-19 cases recorded in Guam for three days now, and only one person is in the hospital for COVID-19.

Leon Guerrero said there are no changes to any quarantine or isolation protocols, which means that incoming travelers will continue to be quarantined at a government facility.

May 1 continues to be the date when Leon Guerrero hopes to open the island back for tourism—if 50% of eligible residents are fully vaccinated. If this goal is met, Leon Guerrero said incoming passengers will only need a negative COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction test 72 hours before coming to Guam in order to be exempted from quarantine.

TORRES

From Page 1

Torres did not indicate the reason for her termination. A source, however, disclosed that the termination has something to do with a grievance complaint against her.

Torres said all matters related to closing out Borja-Arriola's time as OVR director will be addressed by the special assistant for administration, Mathilda A. Rosario.

"Thank you for your time serving my administration. I wish you good luck on your future endeavors," the governor told Borja-Arriola.

Torres appointed Borja-Arriola as OVR director in April 2019. She formerly served as a grants specialist under the Office of Grants Management and State Clearinghouse.

Last month, Rep. Sheila J. Babauta (D-Saipan) notified the House of Representatives during their session that she received a copy of a letter that day from a government employee who has a grievance complaint against his or her supervisor for alleged unprofessionalism.

Babauta, who chairs the House Committee on Natural Resources, said that although the letter is unsigned and from someone who wants to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation, grievances must be taken seriously. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

IN WITH THE NEW NMTI CEO

Jodina Attao, third from left, poses with the Northern Marianas Technical Institution's board of trustees after being named NMTI's interim chief executive officer last Saturday in Lower Base. JUSTINE NAUTA

Supreme Court denies petition to sentence absent defendant

The CNMI Supreme Court denied Friday last week a request by the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to order the trial court to sentence Jiang Hong Sheng in his absence.

Sheng was convicted of assault and battery, assault with a dangerous weapon, and disturbing the peace in 2018. He was set to be sentenced in late 2018 but the hearing was pushed back several times due to Super Typhoon Yutu, delays in completing the presentencing investigation report, Sheng's non-appearance, and the coronavirus pandemic.

A hearing was held in June 2020 but Sheng again did not appear, and the Commonwealth asked the court to sentence Sheng in his absence. The court did not answer the request and so the Commonwealth again requested that the court sentence Sheng in his absence. The court rejected the Commonwealth's request and Sheng has not been sentenced.

The Commonwealth asked the Supreme Court to order the trial court to make a decision about whether to sentence Sheng in his absence or order the trial court to sentence Sheng even if he does not appear. It also argued the court had lost authority over the case when it did not answer the Commonwealth's request and that sentencing had been unreasonably delayed.

The Supreme Court denied the request, finding that the NMI Rules of Criminal Procedure required Sheng to be present for sentencing. The high court provided guidance for finding unreasonable delay but left that decision for the trial court because it requires a close examination of the facts of the case.

The high court's full opinion is available at https://www.cnmilaw.org/spm21.php#gsc.tab=0. ***(PR)***

Tsunami exercise at Guam base

SANTA RITA, Guam—U.S. Naval Base Guam and Apra Harbor waterfront units will participate in a tsunami response exercise on March 30 from 8am to 12pm.

The purpose of this exercise is to evaluate local tsunami response plans; increase tsunami preparedness; enhance training and readiness; validate evacuation timing in the case of an actual tsunami event; and improve coordination throughout the base.

"The 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunamis have reminded the world again of the urgent need to be more prepared for such events," said Robert Ellsworth, NBG Emergency Management director. "This important exercise will test the current procedures for tsunami warnings and help identify operational strengths and weaknesses on NBG."

The exercise, titled Big Wave 21, will simulate a widespread tsunami warning and advisory situation throughout the western Pacific and South China Sea, which requires implementation of local tsunami response plans.

During the tsunami drill, waterfront units will evacuate to designated tsunami assembly areas.

The drills provide an opportunity for NBG emergency management to exercise its operational lines of communication, review response procedures, and promote preparedness. Regular exercising of response plans to high impact events is critical to remain ready for an emergency.

There are currently no planned road closures and the force protection condition status will not change throughout the duration of the exercise.

As part of the exercise, the NBG Giant Voice and Automatic Telephone Notification System will be activated, and residents in surrounding areas of the GV speakers will hear exercise announcements throughout the day. ***(PR)***

DCRM assesses $6K penalty vs GPPC/K-Parts

The Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality's Division of Coastal Resources Management has assessed a $6,0000 penalty against GPPC Inc./K-Parts through a consent order entered on March 17, 2021.

In its enforcement notice on Feb. 9, 2021, DCRM alleged that K-Parts, a subsidiary of GPPC, Inc., sold graded material from a project site in Gualo Rai without a valid DCRM permit and, in doing so, participated in an unauthorized quarrying activity. A quarry is a "major siting" that must be permitted prior to commencement of quarrying activity. The parties entered into a consent order as a good faith settlement of the enforcement issue. The consent order is not considered an admission of a violation. The penalty has been paid to the CNMI Department of Finance.

Compliance with permitting requirements is critical to ensuring that development of all projects located in an area of particular concern or constitute a "major siting" does not have an adverse impact on the CNMI's coastal resources.

"DCRM is pleased that the parties were able to resolve this enforcement issue without the time and expense of a formal enforcement hearing, and hopes news of this settlement will remind all developers in the CNMI to obtain a permit from DCRM before starting any regulated activity," said DCRM enforcement officer Tom Pangelinan.

DCRM's permitting regulations can be found on cnmilaw.org in Chapter 15-20 of the Administrative Code. Additional information and guidance can be found on DCRM's website at www.dcrm.gov.mp. ***(PR)***

MCS students excel during NJSDA regional competition

Mount Carmel School students Justin Mallari, Oscar Bien Buenaflor, and Victor Nash Santos will compete in the CNMI's National team for the next National Junior Speech and Debate Association competition. Justin Mallari, left, will compete in the declamation category, Oscar Bien Buenaflor, center, will compete in the extemporaneous category, and Victor Nash Santos, right, will compete in the storytelling category. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Students in the CNMI recently competed in the annual National Junior Speech and Debate Competition. To avoid congregations, organizers of the event had students submit video recordings of their performance on YouTube that were later reviewed by a panel of judges. Many of Mount Carmel School's students placed during the competition and registered for multiple categories, including storytelling, original oratory, prose, poetry, declamation, impromptu, and extemporaneous performances.

Seventh-grade student Oscar Bien Buenaflor won first place for the extemporaneous category and third place for his impromptu performance. Victor Santos, who is also in seventh grade, won second place in storytelling, second place in original oratory, and fifth place in the prose category. Sixth-grade student Justin Mallari won second place in declamation and fourth place in poetry. Henry Yeom, who is also in the sixth grade, won fifth place in original oratory with his brother, Stephen Yeom earning fourth place in the same category.

Among all the members of the CNMI's NJSDA National Tournament Team, Justin Mallari will compete in the declamation category, Oscar Bien Buenaflor will compete in the extemporaneous category, and Victor Nash Santos will compete in the storytelling category.

The national competition is organized to take place online between June 13 and 19, 2021.

"We are extremely proud of our students who competed in the recent regional competition. I am also grateful to the organizers of these events for finding a safe way for our students to compete in academically challenging competitions like the regional NJSDA competition," said Mount Carmel School president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero. "Extracurricular activities like the NJSDA are some of the clubs we highly encourage many of our students to participate in which have also served as the foundation for many of our students and AlumKnights that have gone on to compete or serve as public speakers and leaders." ***(PR)***

MCS prioritizes on-time graduation

Mount Carmel School announced Sunday that it will continue to prioritize on-time graduation for the 2020-2021 school year. Through the efforts of the school's board of directors and leadership team, the kindergarten, eighth, and 12th-grade graduation ceremonies are on schedule to ensure graduates will earn promotion certificates and diplomas on-time.

The kindergarten promotion ceremony is currently scheduled for May 27, 2021. The eighth grade and 12th-grade Baccalaureate Mass is scheduled for May 28, 2021, with the graduation ceremonies to commence the following day on May 29, 2021. All the mentioned events will be held at the Mount Carmel Cathedral.

As a proactive measure, Mount Carmel School kicked off the current school year with a hybrid approach where students met face-to-face on specific days and were assigned cohorts that meet online for virtual learning. Near the school's second quarter, MCS progressed to a full face-to-face learning schedule while following COVID-19 safety measures. All employees medically eligible to take the COVID-19 vaccine have completed both doses as an added safety measure for their families and school community.

Additionally, with efforts from the school's eadership team and the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, Mount Carmel was able to resume face-to-face classes to aid in the overall education of the students. The school was able to start with cohort assigned school days to full-time face-to-face classes.

The school's effort to meet as many of the mitigation requirements is to also prioritize on-time graduation for kindergarten, eighth and 12th-grade students. MCS will continue to prioritize and maintain the graduation date without compromising the safety of its students.

"It is crucial that we ensure our students, especially our seniors, will graduate on time," said MCS president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero. "Regardless of the pandemic, many of them have successfully gained admission into colleges, universities, and service organizations of their choice. The last thing we want is to delay their plans to pursue their academic goals."

Additionally, Mount Carmel School launched its annual Early Bird Special, which offers major registration and tuition discounts for families until May 1, 2021, for the 2021-2022 school year. The annual early bird registration discount is as follows: For grades K4 - K5 registration is $50 per student, which is normally $100. For students in grades first through twelfth, the registration fee is $100 per student, which is normally $400. ***(PR)***

Guam Cancer Trust Fund awards $946K to five nonprofit cancer organizations

The Guam Cancer Trust Fund has approved fiscal year 2021 funding awards totaling $946,122 for five nonprofit and charitable organizations. The organizations provide patient-directed services in regard to cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and other services that may be required to access treatment, such as off-island transportation and temporary housing.

The funds were awarded as follows:

- American Cancer Society – $127,890
- Catholic Social Service – $313,409
- Edward M. Calvo Cancer Foundation – $345,000
- Global Learning and Engagement Office of the University of Guam – $132,089
- Santa Teresita Church – $27,734

Guam Cancer Care and the Ayuda Foundation are two additional organizations assisting cancer patients using GCTF funds. Due to delays in using their fiscal 2020 funding due to the pandemic, GCTF has granted them no-cost extensions to continue using their fiscal year 2020 awards of $905,117 and $671,480, respectively.

The GCTF is a special government fund created by Public Law 30-80 in 2010 and administered and managed by the University of Guam. The funds come from the Healthy Futures Fund from 15% of the taxes collected on tobacco products. The GCTF was appropriated $1 million for 2021.

Up to 10% of the available funds may be used for cancer education and outreach programs, as legislated by Public Law 32-216, and any of the remaining $1 million appropriation will be carried over to FY 2022 for distribution.

The Guam Cancer Trust Fund Council comprises two UOG members —vice provost for Research and Sponsored Programs and professor Rachael Leon Guerrero, who serves as chairperson, and associate professor Yvette Paulino—and the following community members: Cathy Rivera Castro, Faraz Ouhadi, Peter Sgro, and Ken Leon Guerrero. ***(PR)***

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: DPW21-ITB-023

SUBMISSION DATE: April 09, 2021 TIME: 10:00 A.M

"Ponding Basin Fencing, Saipan"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

A non-refundable payment of **One Hundred Dollars ($100.00)** is required for each set. Payment must be made to the CNMI Treasurer and a receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the Scope of Work at DPW Technical Services Division required for each set

The project package will be available on or after **March 09, 2021** at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan.

There will be a **Pre-bid Conference** for this project on **March 25, 2021**, 9:00 a.m. local time at the Department of Public Works Conference Room 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center Office, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **March 31, 2021** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ JAMES A. ADA
SECRETARY, DPW

/S/FRANCISCO C. AGUON
ACTING DIRECTOR,
DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES

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Comments sought on planned cable throughs Marianas Trench

RTI Solutions, Inc. has requested a right-of-way permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to lay a portion of the ECHO communications cable within the Mariana Trench National Wildlife Refuge, within the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument. The cable, proposed to be laid directly on the seabed through the Refuge, would provide improved telecommunications interconnectivity between the western Pacific region and the U.S. mainland.

The Service is seeking public review and comment on the draft environmental assessment that evaluates the effects of the Service issuing a right-of-way permit for the proposed cable through the Monument. The draft EA will be available for public comment from March 22 to April 6.

The Marianas Trench Marine National Monument is approximately 95,216 square miles and consists of submerged lands and some of the waters of the Mariana Archipelago within three designated units. The Trench Unit and the Volcanic Unit are managed as units of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The CNMI maintains authority for managing the three islands within the Islands Unit. Presidential Proclamation 8335 established the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument in January 2009 and assigned management responsibility to the Secretary of the Interior in coordination with the Secretary of Commerce. The Interior Secretary placed the Trench and Volcanic Units within the National Wildlife Refuge System as the Mariana Trench and Mariana Arc of Fire National Wildlife Refuges and further delegated the management responsibility to the Service.

All comments and information received by April 6 will be considered. The draft EA is available for review on the Refuge website: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/mariana_trench.

Public comments on the draft EA can be submitted:

- Via email: Tammy_Summers@fws.gov; or
- Via mail to: Marianas Refuge & Monument Complex, c/o Superintendent Tammy Summers, PO Box 8134 MOU-3, Dededo, GU 96912

All comments and materials we receive become part of the public record associated with this action. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personally identifiable information in your comments, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personally identifiable information—may be made publicly available at any time. ***(PR)***

House narrowly passes bill that requires legislative appropriation of $515M

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) had to exercise his authority to break a 10-10 tie to pass last Friday a bill that mandates legislative appropriation for the estimated $515-million Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund that will be allocated to the CNMI.

» Villagomez's vote breaks tie

House Bill 22-33, authored by House Means and Ways Committee chair Rep. Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota) and co-sponsored by six Democrats, will now go to the Republican-controlled Senate for action.

Ten members of the majority, including Villagomez, voted "yes" for the passage of the bill. Ten members of the minority, including floor leader Rep. Ralph N. Yumul (R-Saipan), voted against its passage.

House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) presides over a long session last Friday that started at 2:30pm and ended at 8pm. The House narrowly passed a bill that requires legislative appropriation of $515 million. The House also unanimously passed a bill that would repeal a law in order to provide relief for working families by making them eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Under Rule 11 Section 10, Villagomez is given the authority to vote again to break the tie. He exercised that authority last Friday. The votes now stood at 11 "yes" for its passage and 10 for "no."

Rep. John Paul Sablan (R-Saipan) asked House legal counsel Joseph Taijeron if they're in conflict with a one-man one-vote under the CNMI Constitution by Speaker Villagomez breaking the tie.

Taijeron said he does not believe they are in any conflict.

"Our House rules provide for this. This is the rule that that has been longstanding. I don't believe there is a violation," the counsel said.

Sablan asked Villagomez to instruct Taijeron to put his opinion in writing.

Villagomez granted Sablan's request.

House Bill 22-33 will require legislative appropriation for all Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund monies—approximately $515 million—allocated to the CNMI for government operations by U.S. Congress through President Joe Biden's American Rescue Plan.

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Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

JVA No. 21-027

Opening Date: March 05, 2021
Closing Date: March 25, 2021

POSITION TITLE:	**Trades Technician-Electrician**
DEPARTMENT:	**Power Generation**
LOCATION:	**Saipan, Northern Marianas Islands, USA**
ANNUAL SALARY:	**$21, 902.40 to $28, 115.00 per annum, Non- Exempt**
CONTRACT:	**Not Contracted**
POSITION(S):	**Four (4)**

The incumbent will be under the overall supervision of the Power Generation Manager or his/her designee. This class specification represents only the core areas of responsibilities; specific position assignments will vary depending on the needs of Power Generation. Primary duties as a TRADES TECHNICIAN: ELECTRICIAN for a diesel engine power plant.

Duties:

- Performs maintenance, operations, installations, troubleshooting and/or repairs of Generator, switchgears and engine control panels of various brands/make/model, Motor Control Center, Transformer, Protection relays and overhead crane
- Read and interpret electrical diagrams and codes. USA standards, Japanese standards, European standards, & NEC (National Electrical Code).
- Knowledge in AC / DC system, Single and three phase system, Lighting and outlets, Paging System, Fire Alarm, & Battery Bank.
- Familiarize with the usage of various electrical test equipment; Multimeter tester, Insulation resistance tester, Transformer tester, Ground resistance tester, & Hydrometer.
- Familiarize with the usage of various electrical tools Crimper, Pipe bender, Hydraulic knock out puncher, Pipe threader, Micrometer, & Vernier caliper.
- Familiarize with the usage of various power and pneumatic tools Portable drill, Grinder, & Impact wrench.
- Operates specialized and heavy equipment. Emergency generator, Forklift, & Overhead crane.
- Attend to Trouble calls after normal working hours.
- Maintains of daily reports. Practices SAFETY. Cleans, organizes

Minimum Requirements:
Education: High School Diploma, General Education Diploma, or Adult Basic Education. Graduate from a Vocational/Technical Institution as an Electrician or related field. Must demonstrate having had: 4 years of increasingly responsible experience in a diesel engine power plant. 4 years of increasingly responsible experience in performing electrical duties.
Knowledge of: Applicable Federal, Commonwealth and local laws, codes, regulations and/or ordinances; Mechanical and electrical principles, practices and operations of power plant equipment. Customer service principles; Mathematical concepts; Inventory maintenance practices; Taking equipment readings and maintaining reading data; Inspection procedures; Safety procedures and safe work practices; Modern office technology.
Skills in: Performing inspections and analyzing system and equipment data; Interpreting and applying applicable laws, codes, regulations and standard operating procedures; Monitoring plant equipment and making adjustments; Identifying electrical and mechanical issues and recommending or implementing solutions; Initiating requests and trouble calls and providing assistance; Preparing and updating activity logs and status reports; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction. Able to lift and carry heavy objects of 45 pounds and over, climb ladders, reach above the shoulders, stand, sit, crawl and kneel for prolonged periods and perform repeated bending. Recognize color codes, operate cranes and motor vehicles. Occasionally use solvents, de-greasing agents, or other chemical agents, and be assigned to protracted or irregular hours of work; exposed to dust, oil, grease, constant or excessive noise, vibration, and smoke and gas fumes. Work closely with others and/or alone depending on assigned daily activities.

Must be available to work a 24/7 rotation shift to include weekends, holidays and on-call.

Applicants may be tested. Subject to pre-employment drug test.

How to Apply: You may submit your CUC Employment Application and/or resume at the Human Resources office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, from Monday to Friday, 7:30am – 4:30pm. Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota can drop it off at the Tinian and Rota Administration office. Application and resume can also be e-mailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org

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Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT
JVA No. 21 – 028

Opening Date: March 15, 2021 • Closing Date: March 26, 2021

POSITION TITLE:	**Trades Technician-Operator**
DEPARTMENT:	**Power Generation**
LOCATION:	**Saipan, Northern Marianas Islands, USA**
ANNUAL SALARY:	**$20,826.00 to $28,115.00 per annum, Non- Exempt**
CONTRACT:	**Not Contracted**
POSITION(S):	**Two (2)**

The incumbent will be under the overall supervision of the Power Generation Manager or his/her designee. This class specification represents only the core areas of responsibilities; specific position assignments will vary depending on the needs of Power General.

Duties:

- Responsible for the safe and efficient operation of all plant equipment and machinery including, but not limited to, generators, operation of valves, plant production operations, and unloading of diesel fuel tank trucks to storage tanks.
- Follows all safety and operations procedures during operations and maintenance activities.
- Responsible for monitoring all Plant systems as assigned.
- Will act as the responsible person when working without supervision. Responsible for entire plant during operating periods.
- May direct and/or instruct all other personnel as required during all other periods.
- May be on call for emergency response.
- Operates, controls, monitors and inspects generators, switchgears, motor controls, transformers, protection relays, circuit breakers, compressors, RO system and other associated equipment.
- Performs analysis, maintenance, operations, installations and/or repairs of 8 megawatt, 13 megawatt Mitsubishi-MAN diesel engines to include engine auxiliary equipment in the main Power Plant and provide the same services on the small Power Plant with 2.5 megawatt Electromotive Division (EMD) units.
- Ensures work is within Original Equipment Manufacturing (OEM) engineering specifications and quality levels.
- Takes readings from meters, gauges and computers at established intervals, reads and interprets data to take corrective steps as necessary.
- Inspects records and log book entries, and communicates with other plant personnel in order to assess equipment-operating status.
- Performs systems operations to regulate and coordinate transmission load, frequencies and line voltages.
- Identifies potential issues and operational concerns; performs operational inspections and symptomatic maintenance; provides status reports; evaluates and implements solutions and corrective actions under emergency situations.
- Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

Minimum Requirements:
Education: High School Diploma, General Education Diploma, or Adult Basic Education. Considerable knowledge in operation, repair, and maintenance of power generating and/or industrial equipment/facilities. Must demonstrate having had (A) 4 years of increasingly responsible experience in a diesel engine power plant operations and (B) those 4 years of increasingly responsible experience are to be performing operator duties.
Knowledge of: Applicable Federal, Commonwealth and local laws, codes, regulations and/or ordinances; Mechanical and electrical principles, practices and operations of power plant equipment. Customer service principles; Mathematical concepts; Inventory maintenance practices; Taking equipment readings and maintaining reading data; Inspection procedures; Safety procedures and safe work practices; Modern office technology.
Skills in: Performing inspections and analyzing system and equipment data; Interpreting and applying applicable laws, codes, regulations and standard operating procedures; Monitoring plant equipment and making adjustments; Identifying electrical and mechanical issues and recommending or implementing solutions; Initiating requests and trouble calls and providing assistance; Preparing and updating activity logs and status reports; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction. Able to lift and carry heavy objects of 45 pounds and over, climb ladders, reach above the shoulders, stand, sit, crawl and kneel for prolonged periods and perform repeated bending. Recognize color codes, operate cranes and motor vehicles. Occasionally use solvents, de-greasing agents, or other chemical agents, and be assigned to protracted or irregular hours of work; exposed to dust, oil, grease, constant or excessive noise, vibration, and smoke and gas fumes. Work closely with others and/or alone depending on assigned daily activities.

Must be available to work a 24/7 rotation shift to include weekends, holidays and on-call.
Applicants may be tested. Subject to pre-employment drug test.

How to Apply: Submit a completed CUC Employment Application, resume, and applicable supporting documents to the CUC Human Resources office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan. Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota may submit their documents to their respective CUC Administration office. Application, resume and supporting documents can also be e-mailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com

Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

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EDITORIAL

Capitol security must project strength, not fear

The sanctity and security of the U.S. Capitol has not been breached since that woeful day in January. But whispers and threats circulate in dark corners of the internet, and a nation remains on edge.

Lawmakers, Capitol Police, the National Guard, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, all are vigilant. Security fencing and razor wire continue to slash across this country's seat of democracy. A clear message has been sent: "We are ready for the next attack."

This message does not quite hit the mark. Rather, our country should exemplify the words of President Theodore Roosevelt: "Speak softly and carry a big stick."

We must encourage the appearance of business as usual, all the while preparing—being prepared—to intervene in any further disruptions to and within our seat of government.

The events of Jan. 6 will remain etched in this country's memory forever. It is part of our history now. Lawmakers and citizens are understandably shaken.

Nonetheless, we are called to be mindful of the fact that the Capitol is not under siege. Two months after the fact, the Capitol should not continue to look like an armed encampment. Playing literal and symbolic defense every day unwittingly plays into the hands of those who thought they could influence politics and policy with violence. To change the look and feel of our nation's capital is to the detriment of our ideals. The obvious physical presence of heightened security measures—heightened fear—does not mesh with the aura we want to emanate from the heart of our country.

A bulking up of security is justifiable, especially given the spike in threats against lawmakers, as reported by Capitol Police. And Jan. 6 response protocols required review and revision. Indeed, intelligence and security leaders have combed through the flawed decision-making processes that left the Capitol vulnerable. The Capitol Police's chief during the riots resigned on Jan. 7. The acting chief, Yogananda Pittman, has called for an increase in the number of analysts and officers on staff and the creation of a dedicated "stand-ready" force, 80 officers strong, equipped to respond to emergencies at any time. The department has ordered additional protective gear.

What's more, the delays that prevented National Guard troops from arriving on-scene quickly enough to assist the overwhelmed Capitol Police are (rightly) under sharp scrutiny. And communications issues that kept the FBI's warnings about the mob's potential for violence from being properly disseminated are certainly being intensely examined, as well.

Evaluation and adjustment: These are commonsense moves. An ever-present show of force is too much. The goal should be to be "prepared" but "behind the scenes."

Roosevelt was speaking about foreign policy when he coined the "big stick" approach, but the general idea is applicable. His figurative "big stick" was quiet and invisible strength. Not security fences. Not armed officers. Not a uniformed military force. We want solid security at the ready, not in plain sight.

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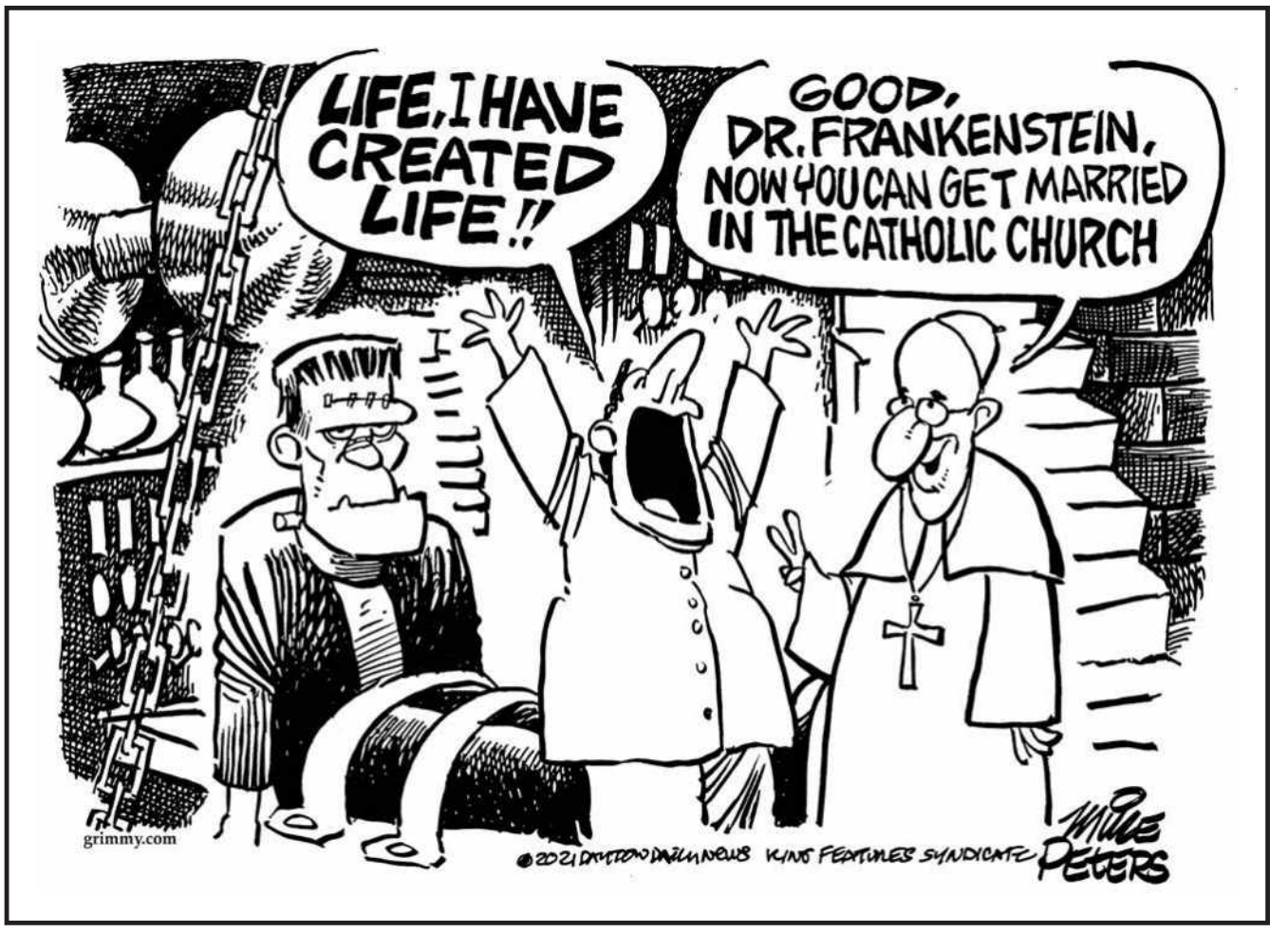
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3 ways employers could help fight vaccine skepticism

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

By RITA MEN
University of Florida

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(**THE CONVERSATION**) Ending the pandemic depends on achieving herd immunity, estimated at 70% or even 80% to 90% of a population. With some 30% of Americans telling pollsters they have no interest in getting vaccinated, that's cutting it a bit close. The numbers are even worse in many other countries.

In the fight against vaccine skepticism, employers can play a key role. This is not only because it's an important precaution for the health and safety of their employees, but also because a recent survey shows people around the world, including in the U.S., tend to trust their employers more than governments or the media. Moreover, Republicans, who are more likely to say they won't get the vaccine, are also generally much more trusting of business, suggesting employers may be able to have more influence on them than journalists or health experts.

As someone who studies how companies communicate with their employees, I have three research-based tips that can make their efforts more effective.

1. Building trust with transparency

Although many workers say they trust their employers more than some other institutions, trust erosion has been a prominent global issue. Just 61% of participants in the survey referenced above, conducted by public relations consultancy Edelman, said they trust businesses to do the right thing.

That's why it's essential for companies to communicate with employees in a way that builds more trust. And research has shown that transparency has been consistently linked to employee relationship with their employer.

By that I mean focus on giving employees the facts—while dispelling some of the myths—and being clear about where it all comes from. There are many ways to disseminate the information, such as through email, flyers, corporate newsletters and social media, but inviting in local health experts is another good way to transparently lay out the facts while also helping skeptical employees get their questions and concerns addressed.

The 2021 Trust Barometer survey showed that people trust scientists and people in their local community more than national leaders. Scientists scored even higher than employees' own CEOs.

2. It's a two-way street

That brings me to another important point: Employers will be more effective if they treat employees as partners in the internal vaccination program. And that means listening as much as talking.

Research has found that companies that are pursuing a major change—such as a merger, layoff or rebranding—are more likely to win high employee acceptance if they engage in two-way communication that emphasizes listening, feedback, reciprocity, openness and trust. When employees feel their voices are being heard and taken seriously by their organization, they feel empowered and more involved, making them more likely to buy in to the organization's decisions.

Besides inviting health experts for Q&A's, employers could also host staff listening sessions such as virtual town halls to gather feedback and address even basic questions, like when people are eligible to get the vaccine, whether it will cost anything and what that means for a return to the office. It also can help address unique concerns and issues of different groups, especially those who surveys show have more hesitancy about taking a vaccine.

3. Empathy works

Businesses that emphasize empathy, compassion and genuine care for employees' well-being have won applause from employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

My own recent study—which is currently under review—examined leaders' use of motivating language during the pandemic. I found that supervisors who gave clear directions, showed empathy for how the pandemic affected workers' personal lives and communicated support were most effective in fostering employee trust in leadership and the organization. While understandably trust that isn't there can't be built overnight, it's never too late to do more.

I found similar results in past research: CEOs perceived as ex-

See 3 on Next Page

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Is it legal for employers to require their employees to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

FINE PRINT

By JORDAN SUNDELL
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Jordan Sundell is a lawyer. His practice primarily focuses on business, real estate, estate planning, and asset protection. You can find his columns here every other Tuesday as well as on The Fine Print on Facebook. You can contact Mr. Sundell via this newspaper at editor@saipantribune.com or 235-6397/235-2440.

Just as wars usher in periods of sweeping mandates, so too has the pandemic. The CNMI, for instance, witnessed mandatory mask wearing, months of curfew, and even the closing of parks, beaches, and a variety of locations around the islands. Meanwhile, other states endured extended lockdowns and an assortment of other restrictions.

The latest fault line is vaccination. Some people support aggressive and widespread vaccination with the goal of reaching herd immunity as fast as possible. For them, the sooner people get vaccinated, the sooner life returns to some version of normal. But other people are skeptical of the vaccines. They are concerned about how quickly the vaccines were developed and whether they are actually safe. As a result, this group would prefer to take a wait-and-see approach before getting vaccinated.

This divergence poses a conundrum for employers: Should they require their employees to get the vaccine? Some employers have said no. For instance, Chipotle Mexican Grill, a massive burrito chain in the United States, encourages its employers to get vaccinated but does not require vaccination. The CNMI Executive Branch, on the other hand, mandated that most of its employees get vaccinated.

Was it legal for the CNMI Executive Branch to require its employees to get vaccinated? Yes. At least according to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which noted that employers can set rules that protect the health and safety of its workplace.

But exceptions exist. For example, people with disabilities or "sincerely held" religious beliefs may skip the vaccine unless doing so poses a significant risk to the rest of the workplace and there is no reasonable accommodation that can be made to mitigate the safety risk. For instance, if an employee opted out for religious reasons and worked in a job where they did not work in close physical proximity to other employees or the public, then it could be tough for the employer to compel the employee to get vaccinated. Likewise, it would be questionable to force a person to vaccinate if their job can be done remotely. But if the employee works as a cashier or a food handler, the employee might need to decide between getting the vaccine or leaving their job.

That brings us to the next question: What happens if an employer requires vaccinations and then an employee suffers an adverse reaction? Though exceedingly rare thus far, adverse reactions have happened. In such cases, an employer-mandated vaccination would probably be considered part of work. So, any injuries would likely be covered by workers' compensation insurance, a type of insurance that every CNMI employer must obtain. If so, this insurance would be the only recourse that an employee could seek.

How about the time the employee spends obtaining the vaccination, do they get paid for their time? Yes. If an employer requires a vaccination as a condition of employment, then the employer must pay for the time it takes to get the vaccination.

Until recently these issues have largely been on the back burner because the vaccines were restricted to the elderly, front-line workers, and a few other groups. Thus, few people in the workforce could obtain the vaccine regardless of company policy. But with the recent announcement that the vaccine will now be available for everyone over 16, CNMI employers need to decide how they want to handle vaccination: Should they copy the Chipotle approach or mimic the CNMI Executive Branch's mandatory policy? And, similarly, employees need to decide how they should respond to those policies. If you have questions, consider contacting an attorney familiar with employment-law topics.

This column is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be taken as legal advice. For your specific case, consult a lawyer.

If the mass killing of six Asian women isn't a hate crime, what is?

By MARY MCNAMARA
Los Angeles Times

Mary McNamara is a culture columnist and critic for the Los Angeles Times.

If anyone was still "uneducated" about the insidious and brutal nature of racism in this country, the recent contemptible slaughter of eight people, including six Asian women, in the Atlanta area, along with the early police statements and media coverage of the crime, should clear everything right up.

On Tuesday, eight people were killed and others wounded at three day spas in the Atlanta area. Police apprehended Robert Aaron Long, who officers said later admitted that he was responsible.

Speaking to the press, Cherokee County Sheriff Frank Reynolds, who is white, said that despite the fact that most of the victims were Asian women, the killings did not appear to be hate crimes —that race "did not appear to be the motive." Instead, Reynolds said, Long "has some issues, potentially sexual addiction"; he may have "frequented these places in the past and may have been lashing out."

"Lashing out."

According to Capt. Jay Baker of the Cherokee sheriff's office, Long saw the spas "as an outlet for him—something he shouldn't be doing, an issue with porn—and he was attempting to take out that temptation.

"Yesterday was a really bad day for him and this is what he did," Baker said.

The "bad day" comment may go down as the official worst public statement ever made by a law enforcement officer, but honestly, the entire early narrative offered by Cherokee County was horrifying. And not in a "let's add insult to injury" way.

In a "let's reveal all the social forces of sexism and racism that make this mass killing possible" way.

Including the media's continued willingness to accept law enforcement's narrative in early coverage—variations of "killings not racially motivated" headlined stories on every media outlet, including this one.

It would be laughable, if it weren't so catastrophic. And tragic. And infuriating. And proof of exactly what the problem is.

First of all, police dismissed the idea that a shooting spree that killed six Asian women was a racist hate crime for the simple reason that Long told them it was not.

"During his interview, he gave no indicators that this was racially motivated," Reynolds said. "We asked him specifically and the answer was no."

Oh, OK. Because killers are notoriously honest and self-aware, let's go with that.

Long may or may not have been motivated by the recent rise in anti-Asian rhetoric, abuse and violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, which various ignorant bigots have attempted to blame entirely on China and, by xenophobic extension, anyone whose heritage includes any of the 48 countries that make up Asia. But Long was most certainly acting on a broader and more historic variety of racism—the continual objectification and sexualization of Asian women in Western culture.

From "dragon lady" to "china doll," Asian women have been fetishized and stereotyped in literature, film, television, comedy and everyday conversation. Whether portrayed as docile and subservient, scheming and insatiable or exotic and inscrutable, Asian women have until very recently been almost categorically depicted as "the other."

After Reynolds and Baker spoke to the press, thousands of Asian women responded on social and mainstream media to the initial "poor little sex addict" narrative with their stories of abuse, harassment and plain old racism. And, as Caroline Framke pointed out in Variety, Twitter responses to the initial news of the killings were just as revealing: "the overwhelming sameness of the replies was unavoidable, infuriating, and instructive. 'Not quite the happy ending they were expecting,' crowed one."

According to the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, 24% of Asian and Pacific Islander women in America report being stalked during their lifetime, and the LA Times need look only at its own award-winning coverage for further proof of the connection between violence and such fetishization. Four years ago, a Times investigation revealed that Dr. George Tyndall, the then-full-time gynecologist at USC's student health clinic, had not only abused and sexually harassed hundreds of his patients but had also appeared to target Asian women, including many Chinese students.

Yet this paper's initial headline about the Atlanta killings—later changed—seemed to give credence to the official account: "Suspect in Atlanta-area massage parlor shootings had 'sexual addiction,' authorities say."

Because even after all the soul-searching done during last summer's Black Lives Matter protests, when first covering any crime, the media—not just The Times— tend to follow the narrative offered by law enforcement.

And in this case, law enforcement was following the narrative offered by an admitted killer.

Long may actually believe that he is not a racist. Just like many millions of us believe that America is not racist, despite this being a country where some states are openly attempting to curtail voting rights in ways that disproportionately affect people of color, where for some "mysterious" reason, the Black and Latino population continues to die from COVID-19 at a far higher rate than the rest of the population and where hate crimes against Asian Americans are rising—Stop AAPI Hate recently reported that the last year saw nearly 3,800 racist attacks on Asian Americans, most of them women.

What Long believes about himself may be interesting to his psychiatrists, but a monster should not be permitted to frame the coverage of his own monstrosities.

Racism pollutes the mind in many ways and often intersects with other bigotries, especially sexism. Eight people died in Georgia on Tuesday, but the target of Long's attacks was tragically clear: He intended to kill Asian women.

If that is not a racist, sexist hate crime, then what the hell is?

3

From Page 8

hibiting genuine care for their employees engender more support for company-wide initiatives.

Beyond the language being used, companies can show they care in other ways—actions speak louder than words, after all. For example, some companies, such as Dollar General, Instacart and Publix, have offered paid leave time or cash incentive bonuses to encourage their employees to get vaccinated.

The U.S. and the world face one of the greatest health crises in history. Ultimately, I believe, it's a collective responsibility of everyone—governments, individuals, companies—to help turn the tide against the pandemic.

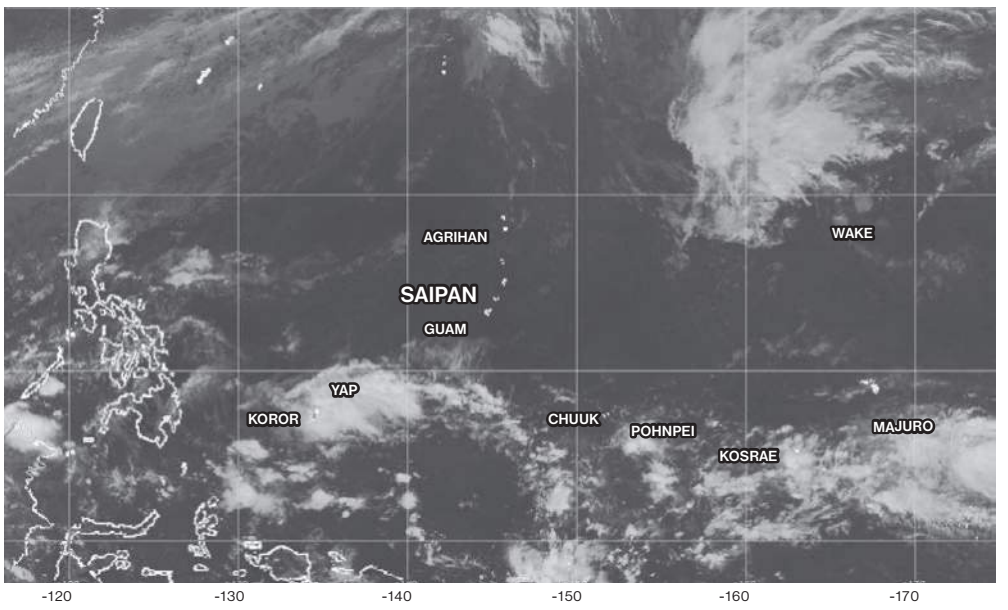
And if companies needed one more reason, surveys and reporting show younger generations increasingly expect companies to be socially responsible. And recent research found that companies who engage in social advocacy tend to enjoy stronger brand loyalty.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
87º 77º	87º 77º	87º 77º	87º 77º	87º 77º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:10 AM, MONDAY, MARCH 22, 2021

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite images show partly cloudy skies and isolated showers over the Marianas waters. These relatively dry conditions extend eastward to past 160E. The buoys reveal combined seas of 4 to 6 feet, composed almost entirely of east-northeast trade-wind swell.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Overcast	83 | 78 °F
Palau	Mostly Cloudy	88 | 77 °F
Yap	Rain	82 | 71 °F
Chuuk	Overcast	83 | 80 °F
Pohnpei	Overcast	80 | 79 °F
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	86 | 79 °F
Majuro	Mostly Cloudy	86 | 79 °F

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:19 AM	6:28 PM
Wednesday	6:18 AM	6:28 PM
Thursday	6:17 AM	6:28 PM
Friday	6:17 AM	6:28 PM
Saturday	6:16 AM	6:28 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	1:46 AM	1:13 PM
Wednesday	-	2:38 AM	2:10 PM
Thursday	-	3:29 AM	3:07 PM
Friday	-	4:17 AM	4:06 PM
Saturday	-	5:03 AM	5:04 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Mostly Cloudy	74 | 61 °F
Beijing	Overcast	66 | 45 °F
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	80 | 68 °F
Honolulu	Clear	84 | 71 °F
London	Drizzle	56 | 37 °F
Los Angeles	Overcast	75 | 55 °F
Manila	Clear	91 | 73 °F
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	82 | 64 °F
Miami	Partly Cloudy	74 | 60 °F
New York	Clear	51 | 41 °F
Osaka	Clear	65 | 48 °F
Paris	Mostly Cloudy	55 | 46 °F
Pusan	Partly Cloudy	60 | 44 °F
Rome	Clear	64 | 49 °F
Salem	Clear	57 | 40 °F
San Francisco	Overcast	66 | 54 °F
Seoul	Overcast	58 | 39 °F
Tokyo	Clear	62 | 50 °F
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	57 | 44 °F

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
4:48 AM	High Tide	1.53
9:45 AM	Low Tide	1.23
1:54 PM	High Tide	1.45
9:48 PM	Low Tide	0.05

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
- ❏ Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
- ❏ Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❏ Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- ❏ Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MARCH 5, 2021

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 5, 6
UA117	7:00am	7:40am	4

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1, 5 via Guam

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 5, 6
UA174	5:15am	5:56am	4

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:55pm	5:56am+1	3 via Guam
UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	5 via Guam

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	5
UA184	10:55pm	4:45am+1	1, 3

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 9, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sun

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sun

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Business

Ocean Star Restaurant *opens* for breakfast

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

MARK RABAGO

Ocean Star Restaurant's shrimp and cheese omelets with whole wheat toast, coffee, and soy milk.

MARK RABAGO

Ocean Star Restaurant has started to offer breakfast last Saturday, March 20, and it is from 6am to 10:30am every day.

Ocean Star Restaurant has tapped into the early bird market by offering breakfast starting last Saturday, March 20.

Owner Cindy Zhang said the Garapan resto-pub's breakfast menu is categorized into five—congee (served with toast), scrambled egg (served with toast bread or fried rice for an additional $2), omelets (served with toast bread or fried rice for an additional $2), Ocean Star's Breakfast (served with two eggs any style, bread or fried rice for an additional $2), and Filipino Breakfast (served with two eggs any style and garlic rice for an additional $2)—and range in price from $8.50 to $9.50.

For more information or for reservations, call 233-1555 or 788-6686.

Ocean Star Restaurant's breakfast also has side orders of pancakes, toasted wheat bread/white bread, and toasted bagel and drinks, like refillable hot coffee, tea, chocolate milk, and soy milk.

"We want to tap into the breakfast market by opening at this early morning hour. Aside from serving the local market who love to get up early for breakfast, we also hope that by opening for breakfast we would be able to give our loyal and hardworking employees more hours to make a living," said Zhang.

Ocean Star Restaurant's breakfast starts at 6am and closes at 10:30am. In its first few days of offering its breakfast menu, customers seem to like its shrimp and cheese omelets, link and Italian sausages, and beefsilog and longsilog meals.

Zhang said the economy couldn't get any worse because of the current COVID-19 pandemic so she's expanding by offering breakfast. "So by the time the tourism industry is revived and the economy humming again, Ocean Star Restaurant would be uniquely positioned to take advantage of the great opportunities," she said.

Like its lunch and dinner menus, Ocean Star Restaurant's breakfast fare is 10% off for local customers. Those who want to sing can also use their private room with a state-of-the-art karaoke machine that can make a Frank Sinatra and Celine Dion out of anyone.

Ocean Star Restaurant, which opened last Dec. 25 and offers an unobstructed view of Saipan's magnificent casino hotel and offers a dual menu of Chinese and Filipino dishes, can comfortably sit 42 customers. It continues to adhere to the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force's guidelines, as social distancing measures, the use of face masks and hand sanitizers, directional arrows, temperature checks, and customer check-in are fully enforced.

Ocean Star Restaurant is on the same building where Cha Café & Bistro is located. It is open from 6am to 10pm, Monday to Sunday. For more information or for reservations, call 233-1555 or 788-6686. They are also on Facebook: Ocean Star Restaurant.

Supply bottlenecks leave ships stranded, businesses stymied

NEW YORK (AP)—A trade bottleneck born of the COVID-19 outbreak has U.S. businesses anxiously awaiting goods from Asia—while off the coast of California, dozens of container ships sit anchored, unable to unload their cargo.

The pandemic has wreaked havoc with the supply chain since early 2020, when it forced the closure of factories throughout China. The seeds of the current problems were sown last March, when Americans stayed home and dramatically changed their buying habits—instead of clothes, they bought electronics, fitness equipment and home improvement products. U.S. companies responded by flooding reopened Asian factories with orders, leading to a chain reaction of congestion and snags at ports and freight hubs across the country as the goods began arriving.

Main Street businesses are now forced to wait months instead of the usual weeks for a delivery from China, and no one knows when the situation will be resolved. Owners do a lot of explaining to customers, order more inventory than usual and lower their expectations for when their shipments will arrive.

Alejandro Bras used to be able to place an order to factories in China and expect to receive his products in 30 days. Now, with problems throughout the supply chain, "we're adding an additional two months," he says. And that two months is "iffy"—it can take even longer.

Bras' company, Womple Studios, sells monthly subscription boxes with educational crafts and activities for children; many of the products are custom-made, so he can't easily find substitutes.

Bras has found himself spending more time on logistics rather than product development, and more time apologizing to the Oakland, California, company's customers who expect a shipment each month. Customers have been understanding—they realize the pandemic has upset shipping and trade worldwide.

The cluster of ships offshore are perhaps the most dramatic symptom of an overwhelmed supply chain. As production surged in Asia, more ships began arriving in the fall at ports in Los Angeles, Long Beach and other West Coast cities than the gateways could handle. Ships holding as many as 14,000 containers have sat offshore, some of them for over a week. At times there have been as many as 40 ships waiting; normally, there's no more than a handful, according to the Marine Exchange of Southern California, a service that monitors port traffic and operations.

"With this type of backlog, it will take several weeks to work through that. It doesn't go away. And new ships are sailing to the U.S. even as we speak," says Shanton Wilcox, a manufacturing adviser with PA Consulting.

But there are choke points on land as well. It can take 8,000 trucks to haul the cargo away from a ship, says Kip Louttit, executive director of the Marine Exchange of Southern California. But when all those trucks hit the road, there aren't enough available when dockworkers are trying to unload the next ships in port. Freight rail traffic has also been affected.

Survey: Business economists favor increased federal spending

WASHINGTON (AP)—A majority of business economists think the recovering economy will benefit from much more government spending despite concerns in financial markets that the $1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief measure Congress recently enacted could ignite inflation.

That's the view that emerged from a survey released Monday by the National Association for Business Economics of 205 forecasters. The economists were polled while the new relief measure was under consideration in Congress but before it was signed into law.

The relief package, proposed by President Joe Biden and backed only by Democrats in Congress, is distributing $1,400 checks to most adults, renewing federal aid for the unemployed and supplying another round of help to small businesses, among other things. But some economists and many Republicans have expressed concern that the size of the package could accelerate inflation and potentially force the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates prematurely.

Yet among the business economists surveyed by the NABE, 41 percent describe the government's current fiscal policy, including such spending, as "about right," and an additional 25% call it too restrictive. Only 34% characterize the current fiscal policy as too stimulative for the economy, though that figure is up sharply from the 17% who said so in August, when the NABE conducted its previous survey.

Last week, the Fed issued forecasts from its policymakers that showed they expect to keep their benchmark short-term rate near zero through 2023. But the NABE survey found that the vast majority of the respondents believe the Fed's first rate hike will come earlier, with nearly three in five predicting that the central bank will start raising rates before the end of 2022.

The survey found that 12% of respondents think the Fed will even start hiking rates this year; 46% believe it will start in 2022. An additional 28% of the economists said they think the first Fed rate increases will occur before the end of 2023.

Only 12% of the NABE economists who responded to the survey felt the Fed would stick with its forecast that it will keep its key rate near zero through at least 2023 to provide continued support to the economy.

At a news conference last week after the Fed's latest policy meeting, Chair Jerome Powell stressed that the central bank wants to see substantial improvement in the job market and the economy. The Fed's forecasts show it doesn't expect the unemployment rate, now at 6.2%, to return to its pre-pandemic level of 3.5% until late 2023.

After the eruption of the pandemic flattened the economy last March, the Fed cut its benchmark short-term rate to a record-tying low near zero, where it had been pinned for seven years after the 2008 financial crisis.

At his news conference, Powell said the Fed expects to see a temporary jump in inflation this spring but thinks price increases will settle down once the economy has fully re-opened. The NABE economists express less confidence.

Nation

A rapid COVID-19 vaccine rollout backfired in some US states

AP

In this March 9, 2021, file photo, Army health specialists fill syringes with the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in Miami. Despite the clamor to speed up the U.S. vaccination drive against COVID-19, the first three months of the rollout suggest faster is not necessarily better.

Despite the clamor to speed up the U.S. vaccination drive against COVID-19 and get the country back to normal, the first three months of the rollout suggest faster is not necessarily better.

A surprising new analysis found that states such as South Carolina and Florida that raced ahead of others to offer the vaccine to ever-larger groups of people have vaccinated smaller shares of their population than those that moved more slowly and methodically, such as Hawaii and Connecticut.

The explanation, as experts see it, is that the rapid expansion of eligibility caused a surge in demand too big for some states to handle and led to serious disarray. Vaccine supplies proved insufficient or unpredictable, websites crashed and phone lines became jammed, spreading confusion, frustration and resignation among many people.

"The infrastructure just wasn't ready. It kind of backfired," said Dr. Rebecca Wurtz, an infectious disease physician and health data specialist at the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health. She added: "In the rush to satisfy everyone, governors satisfied few and frustrated many."

The findings could contain an important go-slow lesson for the nation's governors, many of whom have announced dramatic expansions in their rollouts over the past few days after being challenged by President Joe Biden to make all adults eligible for vaccination by May 1.

"If you're more targeted and more focused, you can do a better job," said Sema Sgaier, executive director of Surgo Ventures, a nonprofit health-data organization that conducted the analysis in collaboration with The Associated Press. "You can open it up—if you have set up the infrastructure to vaccinate all those people fast."

Numerous factors stymied state vaccination performance. Conspiracy theories, poor communication and undependable shipments slowed efforts after the first vials of precious vaccine arrived Dec. 14.

But the size of the eligible population was always within the control of state officials, who made widely varying decisions about how many people they invited to get in line when there wasn't enough vaccine to go around.

When the drive began, most states put health care workers and nursing home residents at the front of the line. In doing so, states were abiding by national recommendations from experts who also suggested doing everything possible to reach everyone in those two groups before moving on to the next categories.

But faced with political pressure and a clamor from the public, governors rushed ahead. Both the outgoing Trump administration and the incoming Biden team urged opening vaccinations to older Americans.

By late January, more than half the states had opened up to older adults—some 75 and above, others 65 and up. That's when the real problems started.

South Carolina expanded eligibility to people in Steven Kite's age group Jan. 13. Kite, 71, immediately booked a vaccination at a hospital. But the next day, his appointment was canceled along with thousands of others because of a shortage of vaccine.

"It was frustrating at first," Kite said. After a week of uncertainty, he rescheduled. He and his wife are now vaccinated. "It ended up working out fine. I know they've had other problems. The delivery of the doses has been very unreliable."

In Missouri, where more than half of adults were eligible for shots, big-city shortages sent vaccine seekers driving hundreds of miles to rural towns. Dr. Elizabeth Bergamini, a pediatrician in suburban St. Louis, drove about 30 people to often out-of-the way vaccination events after the state opened eligibility to those 65 and older Jan. 18 and then expanded further.

"We went from needing to vaccinate several hundred thousand people in the St. Louis area to an additional half-million people, but we still hadn't vaccinated that first group, so it has been this mad dash," Bergamini said. "It has just been a whole hot mess."

"It got a little chaotic," said Dr. Marcus Plescia, chief medical officer of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. "We created far more demand than there was supply. That stressed the system and that may have left the system less efficient."

Plescia said the analysis suggests that "a more methodical, measured, judicious, priority-based approach—despite people's perception—actually can be as efficient, or more efficient, than opening things up and making it available to more people."

Biden aims to prevent border crossings from swamping agenda

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Biden administration is scrambling to manage a growing humanitarian and political challenge at the U.S.-Mexico border that threatens to overshadow its ambitious legislative agenda.

With the number of migrants surging, administration officials say Biden inherited an untenable situation that resulted from what they say was President Donald Trump's undermining and weakening of the immigration system.

But as Congress pivots to immigration legislation, stories of unaccompanied minors and families trying to cross the border and seek asylum and of overwhelmed border facilities have begun to dominate the headlines, distracting from the White House's efforts to promote the recently passed $1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill.

Biden told reporters Sunday at the White House that "at some point" he would go to the border and that he knows what is going on in the border facilities.

"A lot more, we are in the process of doing it now, including making sure we reestablish what existed before, which was they can stay in place and make their case from their home countries," Biden said upon returning from a weekend at Camp David.

The White House dispatched Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to four Sunday news shows in an effort to stress that it was working to get things under control.

"Our message has been straightforward—the border is closed," Mayorkas said. "We are expelling families. We are expelling single adults. And we've made a decision that we will not expel young, vulnerable children."

The White House has steadfastly refused to call the situation a "crisis," leading to a Washington battle over the appropriate description of the tense situation. Career immigration officials had warned there could be a surge after the November election and the news that Trump's hard-line policies were being reversed.

In the first days of his term, Biden acted to undo some of Trump's measures, a rollback interpreted by some as a signal to travel to the United States. While the new administration was working on immigration legislation to address long-term problems, it didn't have an on-the-ground plan to manage a surge of migrants.

"We have seen large numbers of migration in the past. We know how to address it. We have a plan. We are executing on our plan and we will succeed," Mayorkas said. But, he added, "it takes time" and is "especially challenging and difficult now" because of the Trump administration's moves. "So we are rebuilding the system as we address the needs of vulnerable children who arrived at our borders."

Biden officials have done away with the "kids in cages" imagery that defined the Trump family separation policy—though Trump used facilities built during the Obama administration—but have struggled with creating the needed capacity to deal with the surge. Unaccompanied children and teenagers in Customs and Border Protection custody must be transferred to the care of Health and Human Services within three days, although the minors coming now are being held for days longer than that.

GOP US Rep. Tom Reed retiring amid misconduct claim

U.S. Rep. Tom Reed, a Republican from western New York who was accused last week of rubbing a female lobbyist's back and unhooking her bra without her consent in 2017, apologized to the woman on Sunday and announced that he will not run for reelection next year.

Reed, 49, said in a statement that the incident involving then-lobbyist Nicolette Davis occurred "at a time in my life in which I was struggling." He said he entered treatment that year and realized he was "powerless over alcohol."

Reed apologized to his wife and children, and to Davis, and said he planned "to dedicate my time and attention to making amends for my past actions."

Reed, who was first elected to Congress in 2010, had been among the members of Congress calling for the resignation of Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo over sexual harassment allegations. In late February, Reed said he was seriously considering running for governor against Cuomo should the Democrat seek a fourth term next year.

Reed said in his statement Sunday that he would not seek any elective office in 2022.

The announcement came two days after The Washington Post reported the allegations from Davis, who was 25 and a lobbyist for insurer Aflac when she said Reed, seated next to her at a Minneapolis bar, unhooked her bra from outside her blouse and moved his hand to her thigh.

"A drunk congressman is rubbing my back," she texted a co-worker at Aflac that evening, adding later, "HELP HELP."

Reed released a statement Friday saying, "This account of my actions is not accurate."

In his statement Sunday he said, " In reflection, my personal depiction of this event is irrelevant. Simply put, my behavior caused her pain, showed her disrespect and was unprofessional. I was wrong, I am sorry, and I take full responsibility."

A former mayor of Corning, New York, Reed is co-chair of the House of Representatives' bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus.

He voted against impeaching former President Donald Trump in January but voted in favor of certifying the 2020 election of Democrat Joe Biden. ***(AP)***

Asia

AS CRACKDOWN CLAIMS MORE LIVES

Doctors protest in Myanmar

MANDALAY, Myanmar (AP)—Health care workers marched through Myanmar's second-biggest city Sunday as part of a broad civil disobedience movement against last month's coup. While their protest was left alone, security forces used violence elsewhere and shot dead at least one person.

About 100 doctors, nurses, medical students and pharmacists, wearing long white coats, lined up on a main road in Mandalay to chant slogans and voice their opposition to the Feb. 1 coup that toppled the elected civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Mandalay has been a major center of opposition to the takeover, and later in the day engineers there held what has been dubbed a "no-human strike," an increasingly popular tactic that involves lining up signboards in streets or other public areas as proxies for human protesters.

Video recorded in Mandalay showed a motorcyclist apparently being shot off his motorbike by police on an empty street.

As the people who recorded the video shout "He's been hit! He's been hit! Go and rescue him!" police quickly appear and swarm around him just after he slumps to the ground. Police led him away on foot while another officer rides off on the motorbike. It isn't clear how badly he was hurt or what happened to him.

The civil disobedience movement has used widespread boycotts, strikes and other actions with the aim to restore civilian government and return Myanmar to its slow march toward democracy that began nearly a decade ago after a half-century of military rule.

In recent weeks, street protests have faded as a tactic in the face of rising deaths as police and soldiers have shot live fire into crowds and indiscriminately detained people. The independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners had verified 247 deaths nationwide but says the actual total, including cases where verification has been difficult, is probably much higher.

At least one protester was shot dead Sunday in Monywa, another central Myanmar city, according to the online news site Myanmar Now and numerous social media posts.

Myanmar Now, citing a doctor in Monywa, identified the victim as Min Min Zaw, who was shot in the head as he was helping assemble barricades for a protest. Virtually all the dead since the coup have been shot, many of them in the head.

Elsewhere, students, teachers and engineers marched in Dawei, a city in southeastern Myanmar that has become a hotspot for opposition and has seen at least five killings by security forces.

On Sunday, protesters broke into small groups and varied the timings of their marches in an effort to avoid confrontations.

In a more rural outlying area, protesters from several villages in Launglone Township held their protest on motorbikes.

In Yangon's Thaketa neighborhood, a funeral was held Sunday for 15-year-old high school student Aung Kaung Htet, who was killed a day earlier, Myanmar Now reported.

According to posts on social media, Thaketa was one of several areas where police fired their guns Sunday, the others including Tachileik and Taunnggyi in Shan State in eastern Myanmar, and Gangaw, a town in Magway Division in the west-central part of the country.

The protesters' cause over the weekend received support from demonstrations in several places abroad, including Tokyo, Taipei in Taiwan and on Times Square in New York City.

In addition to deaths since the coup, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners has confirmed 2,345 people have been arrested or charged since the coup, with 1,994 still detained or sought for arrest.

Japan PM vows no virus rebound as emergency measures end

TOKYO (AP)—Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga pledged Sunday to do his utmost to prevent a resurgence of the coronavirus ahead of the Olympic torch relay and his upcoming visit to Washington.

Suga was addressing his ruling Liberal Democratic Party's annual convention, just hours ahead of the planned lifting of a virus state of emergency in the the Tokyo region. Suga said after the state of emergency is lifted is "an extremely important time" for virus prevention.

"We must not put our guards down ... to prevent the infections from rebounding," he said.

Suga on Thursday announced that the monthslong emergency measures for Tokyo, Kanagawa, Chiba and Saitama would end at midnight Sunday, a move underscoring his government's eagerness to minimize burdens on businesses and keep the economy going, despite concerns raised by experts about the potential for an upsurge.

The lifting of the measure comes just days before the Olympic torch relay starts from Fukushima, northeast of Tokyo and the site of the 2011 nuclear crisis, as a symbol of reconstruction.

Suga renewed his pledge to achieve the Olympics in July as "a proof of the victory against the coronavirus," after its one-year postponement due to the pandemic. Olympic officials decided Saturday to bar spectators from abroad.

"We will deliver courage and hope from Japan to the world," Suga said.

Suga also wants to keep the infections low ahead of his planned Washington visit in early April for his first in-person summit with President Joe Biden. He will be the first foreign leader to meet in person, underscoring the importance of the Japan-U.S. alliance.

Suga, who received the first shot of a COVID-19 vaccine last week, said he looks forward to discussing pandemic measures, as well as cooperation in dealing with China's growing influence in the region.

"We would still face ups and downs, but we will surely find a light ahead of us," Suga said.

Suga vowed to do the utmost to protect the people's lives and health and sought their cooperation in doing what they can to get infections under control and "regain the peace of mind and daily lives."

The measures have been in place for the Tokyo region since Jan. 7 after daily infections surged to new highs in the area. The non-binding measure relied on requests for restaurants and bars to close at 8 p.m. and take preventive measures.

The government will step up virus tests, monitoring for more contagious new variants and pay subsidies for restaurants and bars who cooperate to close at 9 p.m.

Japan has not imposed a hard lockdown and has kept infections lower than the United States and many European nations. Japan has recorded fewer than a million cases and about 8,800 deaths since the pandemic began, the health ministry said.

Experts have said they worry about a the potential for a resurgence of infections now that the decrease in infections in the Tokyo area has leveled off and people grow fatigued with taking virus prevention measures.

World

Mexico limits non-essential travel on southern border

CIUDAD HIDALGO, Mexico (AP)—The Mexican banks of the Suchiate river dawned Sunday with a heavy presence of immigration agents in place to enforce Mexico's new limits on all but essential travel at its shared border with Guatemala.

AP

Guatemalan travelers cross the Suchiate River, border between Guatemala and Mexico, into Mexico aboard a raft near Ciudad Hidalgo, Sunday, March 21, 2021.

Dozens of immigration agents lined the riverside asking those who landed on the giant innertube rafts that carry most of the cross-border traffic for documentation and turning many back.

But those turned away weren't migrants, they were the small-time Guatemalan merchants and residents from Tecun Uman, across the river, who buy in bulk in Mexico to re-sell in Guatemala or purchase household items when the exchange rate favors it.

"They haven't let us enter because they think we're migrants when really we're only coming to shop," said Amalia Vázquez, a Guatemalan citizen with her baby tied to her back and seven other relatives accompanying her. Vázquez said her family travels the 100 kilometers monthly from Quetzaltenango to buy plastic items and sweets they re-sell at home.

After a negotiation, immigration agents allowed her sister and another relative to pass, but they had to leave their IDs with agents while they shopped. Nearby, other agents turned away a man who said he was just coming to buy his medicine.

The Mexican government has interrupted the usually free-flowing cross-river traffic here before, infuriating merchants on both sides. In recent years, as migrant caravans arrived in Tecun Uman, Mexican troops lined the Mexican side of the Suchiate and largely stopped the raft traffic.

The last time was in January 2020 when hundreds of soldiers blocked large groups of migrants trying to cross.

This time there is no large migrant presence across the river, but Mexico is again under pressure to slow the flow of migrants north as the U.S. government wrestles with growing numbers, especially of families and unaccompanied minors.

Many of those, however, are believed to be traveling with smugglers who can simply choose among the hundreds of unmonitored crossing points on Mexico's long jungle borders with Guatemala and Belize.

The government said the measures that went into effect Sunday—one year into the pandemic—were aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19. But most saw it as a cover to again try to control illegal migration and no one was talking about health concerns. The U.S. and Mexico have had a similar limit on non-essential travel on their shared border for a year, but Mexico is one of the few countries to otherwise not impose health restrictions on people entering the country by land or air.

Attack on kissing men fuels push for Italy hate crime law

ROME (AP)—A recent attack in a Rome train station on two men who were kissing fueled calls by Italian political leaders Sunday for quick passage of a hate crimes law to protect members of the LGBTQ community, women and people with disabilities.

Italian TV on Sunday aired what it said was video footage of the attack, which occurred on the platform at a local train station in late February. In the video, a man can be seen swinging at two young men. One of the pair is seen trying to fend off the blows, and the attacker keeps swinging at him.

One of the men who was attacked suffered an eye injury, Italian news agency La-Presse reported.

Rome Mayor Virginia Raggi and the area's governor, Nicola Zingaretti, were among the officials denouncing the attack. Raggi, who is from the populist 5-Star Movement, tweeted that the attack was an "intolerable offense against all our community."

Wrote Lazio Gov. Zingaretti, a Democrat, on Facebook: "Two young men beaten up for a kiss. Seems incredible but it happened to a gay couple" in Rome.

Zingaretti added that it was "time right now for the law against homophobia" and that "it's time for a country more just for everyone."

The proposed law aims to protect the LGBTQ community, women and people with disabilities from hate attacks. A conviction under the law carries a potential prison sentence of 18 months, as the bill is currently drafted.

After passage in the Italian Parliament's lower chamber in November, the bill has been awaiting scheduling for debate in the Senate. The right-wing party League led by Matteo Salvini has opposed the legislation.

Among those expressing dismay at the train station attack was Salvini's far-right ally, Giorgia Meloni, who heads the Brothers of Italy party.

"I remain shocked in the face of this absurd and brutal violence in Rome at the expense of a young man who, as the press has presented it, was supposedly attacked only because he was kissing his companion,," said Meloni, who posted the video on Facebook.

She demanded that the alleged attacker pay for his crime, adding: "These images are unworthy of a civilized country."

The legislation also would allocate funding for centers which fight discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and help cover legal, health and psychological expenses.

Overdrive

AUTO REVIEW: Lexus RC sports coupe brings sporty driving and curb appeal

By EMMA JAYNE WILLIAMS
FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

(LEXUS/TNS)

Striking style. Dynamic performance. Next-generation technology. The Lexus RC is a refined luxury sports coupe, crafted to stand apart. For 2021, the stunning two-door adds the new RC Black Line Special Edition to its lineup, offering Lexus owners a new way to express their bravura. For added peace of mind and convenience, Blind Spot Monitor with Rear Cross-Traffic Alert is now standard across the entire RC range.

Introduced in 2014, the Lexus RC is a modern luxury sports coupe, with bold styling, flexible driving character, and next-generation technology, designed for drivers who value performance and unrivaled craftsmanship.

The RC features a few changes for 2021, including a new, limited-production 350-unit Black Line Special Edition with unique crafted touches. Now standard are the Blind Spot Monitor with Rear Cross-Traffic Alert and heated electrochromic exterior mirrors.

A new exterior color, Grecian Water, is available, depending on trim level.

Both the RC 350 ($45,050) and RC 350 F Sport ($49,520) come with standard rear-wheel drive. My F Sport tester added full-time all-wheel drive for $1,610 extra.

Their 311-horsepower, 3.5-liter V-6 generates 280-foot-pounds of peak torque, features direct and port fuel injection, and produces an awesome sound.

Rear-drive models have an eight-speed Sport Direct-Shift transmission, while AWD models come with a six-speed automatic transmission with steering-wheel-mounted paddle shifters.

EPA ratings for my RC 350 F Sport AWD are 19 mpg city/26 highway/22 combined. Driving mostly local two-lane roads and city streets, I averaged 23.4 mpg.

My RC 350's athletic form and powerful stance featured an impressive fascia with dramatic Premium Triple-Beam LED headlights ($1,160) and strong character lines sweeping back from the headlights to the A-pillars and flowing to the dramatic rear valance and 3-D wraparound LED taillights, creating an enticing exterior.

Specific F Sport features include the bolstered front heated/ventilated power seats; the Lexus memory system for the driver's seat, outside mirrors and steering wheel; power tilt/telescopic steering wheel; rain sensing wipers; Drive Mode Select with Sport S, S+, and Custom modes; F Sport suspension tuning; Adaptive Variable Suspension; Dark Gray Streamline trim; aluminum pedals and footrest; F Sport mesh grille with smoked-chrome trim; and moveable speedometer with specific graphics for each drive mode.

Seven exterior colors are available for the RC 350 F Sport, including some with interesting names like Flare Yellow (nearly school bus yellow), Caviar (off-black), and Atomic Silver (very shiny dark pewter).

My F Sport was Infrared (slightly darker than fire truck red, $595) riding on 19-inch split-five-spoke alloy wheel with Dark Graphite finish. The dark glossy wheels and grille trim were striking without being overpowering.

An All-Weather Package ($220) added a windshield wiper de-icer, headlight washers, water-repellent front-door glass, and a fast-response interior heater. I had perfect testing conditions with cold, wet weather. An F Sport Heated Steering Wheel ($150) was also appreciated.

Plush, quilt stitched/perforated, white NuLuxe seating was enticing with the same white on door armrests and console padding. The remainder of the interior was black with white stitching, and linear-textured Dark Gray Streamline trim on door armrests and console control panel.

The front Sport seats with enhanced bolsters were supportive through even aggressive turning. Race-inspired features included an F Sport-badged steering wheel with white stitching, a perforated leather-trimmed shift knob, and aluminum sport pedals.

A combination of performance and luxury, the cockpit displayed stunning craftsmanship and artistry with a signature analog clock and expressive gauges for extra refinement.

The driver and front passenger could control their preferred temperature, while a smog-sensing system automatically switched to recirculation mode if high levels of outside pollutants were detected.

Cabin storage was limited to slim door pockets without bottle holders, two front cupholders, seatback pockets for the rear, and a small armrest bin with a 12-volt outlet, auxiliary port, and two USB ports.

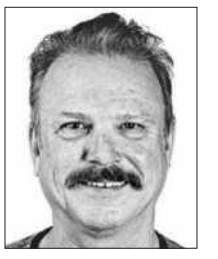
The two rear seats were nicely padded, although legroom was extremely snug at 27.3 inches, and there was only a small, shallow tray between the seat cushions for small objects.

A Navigation/Mark Levinson Premium Audio Package ($2,725) brought lots of audio and driver-assist upgrades, including an 835-watt surround-sound system, 17 high-efficiency speakers including a subwoofer and Clari-Fi technology, machined-aluminum control knobs, a 10.3-inch split-screen navigation system with multimedia display, Lexus Enform Dynamic Navigation, Dynamic Voice Command, Lexus Enform Destination Assist, and In-dash DVD/CD player. My favorite feature of the navigation system was the weather overlay.

Downloaded music is digitally-compressed and loses up to 90% of the original audio details. ClariFi instantly restores the true sound. Dynamic Navigation provides the latest updates, alternate routes, and relevant search results with three enhanced features: cloud-based updates with Dynamic Map, alternate routes based on conditions ahead with Dynamic Route, and points of interest sorted by relevance with Dynamic POI search.

New Dynamic Voice Recognition (introduced to other models in 2018) improves the experience with a broader language library, expanded phrase recognition, and augmented point-of-interest address searches.

Motormouth: Your car knows more about you than you might think



By BOB WEBER
Chicago Tribune

Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. He maintains this status by seeking certification every five years. Weber's work appears in professional trade magazines and other consumer publications. His writing also appears in automotive trade publications, Consumer Guide and Consumers Digest*. Send questions along with name and town to Motormouth, Rides, Chicago Tribune, 160 N. Stetson Ave., Fourth Floor, Chicago, IL 60601 or motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.*

Q: There is something your readers might fail to do when trading in a late model auto. Those with navigation systems probably have their home address programmed as the "Go to Home" address. In addition, many might also have their garage door opener and/or community gate code programmed as well. This could possibly lead to unfettered access to their property. Sellers should make sure their vital information has been deleted.

—C.R., Coral Springs, Florida

A: Good advice. I once bought a used vehicle that had the previous owner's telephone contacts. Of course, I erased them. I didn't recognize any of the names as people who owed me money.

Q: You recently ran a column about a guy with the Subaru Forester who complained that the hill descent feature kicked out at 25 mph. I have had several Subaru Outbacks and had been under the impression that the hill descent feature was designed to let the engine do some of the braking and take the load off the brakes. However, I looked at the owner's manual. (This is something I do every 10 years or so whether I need it or not). Lo and behold! Hill descent is a brake feature.

—R.B., Colchester, Connecticut

A: If you have a long descent down a steep mountain road, you have a good point. But the Subaru hill descent feature is designed for slow-speed, off-road driving. There is no worry of the brakes overheating or wearing prematurely.

Q: For us non-engineers/non-physics majors will you please tell us why an electric vehicle can't contribute to its own charging? Solar roof panels? Alternator/generators?

—T.T., Lockhart, Texas

A: Good ideas and most are being used. During braking, the electric drive motors switch to generators to charge the batteries. It is called regenerative braking. The Chevy Volt had a small gasoline engine that could charge the batteries. Solar panels have been kicked around for years but are not yet mainstream.

Q: I still have my 2002 Toyota Corolla S workhorse. It has just over 100,000 miles and still runs like a champ. Per proper maintenance, I have never had any mechanical problems. However, periodically the check engine light comes on because of a problem with emissions, the gas cap. The cap is changed or tightened, and the problem goes away until the next time it randomly happens. Hoping you will be able to solve three issues with this great car. Is there a permanent fix to this issue? Is there a sensing device that I can purchase to assure me that it is just an emissions leak and not something more serious? Will I be able to clear the check engine light without taking it to the mechanic?

—L.B., Fort Lauderdale, Florida

A: Your car already has a sensing device, the check engine light. If it glows steadily, there is a problem that is causing increased emissions for either the tailpipe or evaporative emissions from fuel. If the light blinks, there is a serious problem, and you should have it checked right away. In most cases, the check engine light stops coming on if the problem goes away, as you have discovered by replacing the bad gas cap. Although you may be able to clear the check engine light by disconnecting the battery temporarily, you may also lose important settings. On some cars, that may include rendering the windows inoperative, and loss of radio settings.

Life & Style

'Borat,' 'Promising Young Woman' win at Writers Guild Awards

NEW YORK (AP)—Sacha Baron Cohen's "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm" was partly improvised and scripted by nine writers, but it still walked away Sunday night with one of the Writers Guild Awards' top honors, best adapted screenplay.

At the guild's virtual, pre-recorded 73rd annual awards, the biggest winners were a pair of awards-season dark horses. Best original screenplay went to the script for the feminist revenge thriller "Promising Young Woman," by writer-director Emerald Fennell. The film, which is nominated for five Oscars including best picture, triumphed over Aaron Sorkin's "The Trial of the Chicago 7," along with "Sound of Metal," "Judas and the Black Messiah" and "Palm Springs."

The "Borat" sequel win came over "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," "News of the World," "One Night in Miami" and "The White Tiger." Due to guild regulations, several of this year's best-picture nominees at the Academy Awards weren't nominated, including "Mank," "Nomadland," "Minari" and "The Father."

Cohen and his fellow eight credited writers for the film's screenplay and story accepted the award by Zoom.

"Thank you for this incredible award, though I can't help thinking we won it because 60% of the Writers Guild worked on this movie," said Cohen. "A film like this is extremely hard to write partly because it stars real people whose behavior is completely unpredictable. Well, apart from Rudy Giuliani who did everything we hoped for."

Kal Penn hosted the show, streamed privately for invitees, from his living room. He began dressed in a tuxedo and ended in his pajamas.

Best documentary screenplay went to the Jamal Khashoggi documentary "The Dissident," written by director Bryan Fogel and Mark Monroe. The film, which streaming services were too timid to acquire, Fogel has argued, missed out on an Oscar nomination.

Other awards included "Ted Lasso" for comedy series; "The Crown" for drama series; "The Great" for episodic comedy; and "Ozark" for episodic drama.

LA police: Armie Hammer under sexual assault investigation

LOS ANGELES (AP) —Actor Armie Hammer is under investigation for sexual assault, Los Angeles police said Thursday.

Hammer's attorney denied the allegation.

Hammer is the main suspect in a sexual assault that was reported to police on Feb. 3, LAPD spokesman Officer Drake Madison said. Police would give no further details on the incident or who made the report.

Hammer

Earlier Thursday at a video news conference, a woman said that on April 24, 2017, in Los Angeles, Hammer raped her for four hours, slammed her head against a wall and committed other violent acts against her.

The Associated Press does not generally identify alleged victims of sexual assault.

The woman appeared on camera but identified herself only by her first name, Effie.

"During those four hours I tried to get away but he wouldn't let me," she said through tears. "I thought that he was going to kill me. He then left with no concern for my well-being."

The woman's attorney, Gloria Allred, said they had given evidence to Los Angeles police, including photos of Effie's injuries. Allred declined to say when they made the report, and would not confirm that it was the one made in February that the LAPD is investigating.

Effie was 20 when she and Hammer met on Facebook and began a relationship in 2016, and they had their last contact last year, Allred said.

Lawsuit filed over hit-and-run death of Nicki Minaj's father

MINEOLA, N.Y. (AP)—Rapper Nicki Minaj's mother, Carol Maraj, has filed a $150 million lawsuit against the man who is accused of killing Minaj's father in a hit-and-run crash last month, an attorney for Maraj said.

Minaj

Charles Polevich, 70, is accused of striking Robert Maraj, 64, on Long Island on Feb. 12 and then driving off without calling 911. Maraj died at a hospital the next day.

Polevich was arrested on Feb. 17 on charges of leaving the scene of an incident and tampering with physical evidence. He pleaded not guilty and was freed on bail and ordered not to leave New York state.

Newsday reports that Carol Maraj's lawsuit, filed in Nassau County state Supreme Court earlier this month, claims that Polevich was negligent, reckless and careless when he hit Maraj with his car and allegedly left him at the scene.

"He was not only irresponsible and negligent, but more concerned about running away and hiding than seeking help," Benjamin Crump, one of the attorneys representing Carol Maraj, said in an Instagram post Friday.

A telephone message was left Sunday with Polevich's attorney, listed in online court records as Marc Gann of Mineola.

Greece to reopen ancient sites despite COVID-19 surge

ATHENS, Greece (AP)—Greece's government announced plans Friday to reopen the Acropolis in Athens and other ancient sites nationwide and provide free weekly rapid tests for COVID-19 for all the country's residents as it prepares to restart the tourism season in mid-May.

The measures were announced despite an ongoing surge in daily infections to 20.9 per 100,000 residents, as a seven-day rolling average, with private hospital space being used by the state-run health service to cope with treatment demand.

Starting Saturday, a weekend curfew will be relaxed. It will be followed on Monday by a series of other measures including a limited opening of barbershops and hair salons, and ancient sites for people on brief outings. Museums will remain closed.

"What we are talking about are pressure-release valves. This is to help people comply with restrictions that have been in effect for such a long time," said Akis Skertsos, a deputy minister for government coordination.

The reopening of ancient sites was announced despite strong reservations from an association of state employees at ancient sites which warned that "procedures required for secure safety protocols have not been completed" but did not give further details.

Los Angeles TV crew injured in SUV crash, driver arrested

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A longtime Los Angeles television news reporter and his photographer were among five people seriously injured Friday when an allegedly drunk driver crashed his SUV into a building along the Hollywood Walk of Fame, officials said.

At the time of the crash, FOX 11 reporter Hal Eisner, a well-respected journalist in Los Angeles for more than 38 years, had been working on a story with photojournalist Joab Perez Friday afternoon about the famous El Capitan Theatre and Los Angeles County's partial reopening this week, which allows for movie theaters to open at limited capacity, according to FOX 11. Perez has been with the station for nearly three years.

The male driver has been arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence, the Los Angeles Police Department said. He told police he fell asleep at the wheel but failed field sobriety tests.

Authorities believe he was driving while intoxicated when he drove the SUV the wrong way and ran off the road, LAPD Capt. Brian Wendling said. The crash occurred along the Walk of Fame near the well-known intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue.

Bossy sister turns a good deed into a bad situation

DEAR ABBY: My older sister moved in with me after she was placed on furlough because of the pandemic. I was resistant to her moving in because she likes to run the show, she has taken financial advantage of every family member, never admits she's wrong, and I was worried she'd take over. But I wanted to help her save money, so I said yes.

Now it's like I'm walking on eggshells. Every time I make a simple request, she accuses me of trying to act like her mother! After six months she asked if I'd prefer she move in with our parents, and I said yes. Now she's upset, and my parents are begging me to let her stay because they don't want to deal with her. I just want my peace back. What should I do?

TIRED LITTLE SISTER

DEAR TIRED: I'll tell you what NOT to do. Do not relent. She asked if you'd prefer she move in with your parents, and you answered her honestly. Set a date for her to be out and stick to it. It will save your sanity.

DEAR ABBY: I'm a very hands-on person, recently retired, and I would like to do volunteer work. Sounds simple, right? Well, it seems no one needs volunteers. I have been looking for something, preferably ecological in nature, for two years. But whenever I inquire, I'm flooded with appeals for money. I was hoping you might give me some more ideas.

BROKE BUT AVAILABLE

DEAR BROKE: You describe yourself as hands-on with an interest in things that are ecological. Because your efforts are not needed at the organizations you contacted, modify your search.

Would you be interested in helping to keep your neighborhood clean and free of trash, starting a vegetable garden to feed the needy, performing yard and gardening chores for elderly members of your community who can no longer do it themselves? How about teaching a class in ecology at a community center?

If that is not to your liking, would you deliver meals to shut-ins for a while? An animal hospital or pet rescue group may be able to use a willing hand in exercising the animals in their care. The options are there. Sample them until you find something to your liking.

DEAR ABBY: I am a 40-something woman and have been with my partner for four years. I am the mother of three boys; he's a father of two girls. We live at my house.

Whenever his youngest comes to visit (she's 16), she insists on his every second of attention. He eats it up. It's so frustrating. They both ignore the fact that I am here. It's very upsetting and, I don't think it's normal. What about you?

MIFFED IN MICHIGAN

DEAR MIFFED: Have you discussed this with your partner? I don't know how often the girl comes to visit, but clearly she is starved for her father's attention. I don't think you should begrudge it unless her visits last for an extended period. Of course, your partner and his daughter should be respectful and not treat you like an old piece of furniture or a servant, but you might be less upset if you use some of that time to pursue interests or relationships of your own.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

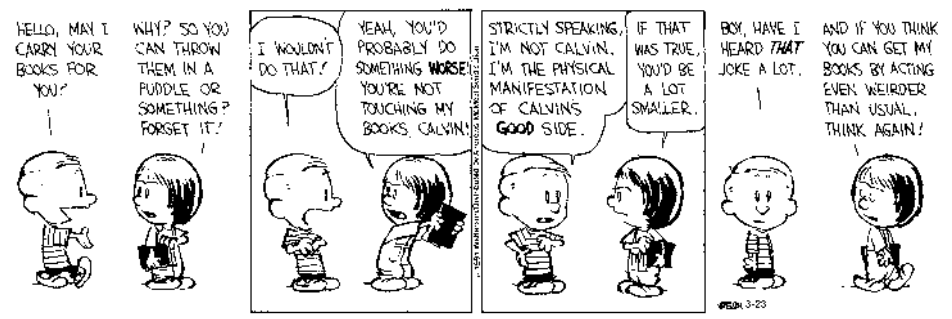
By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

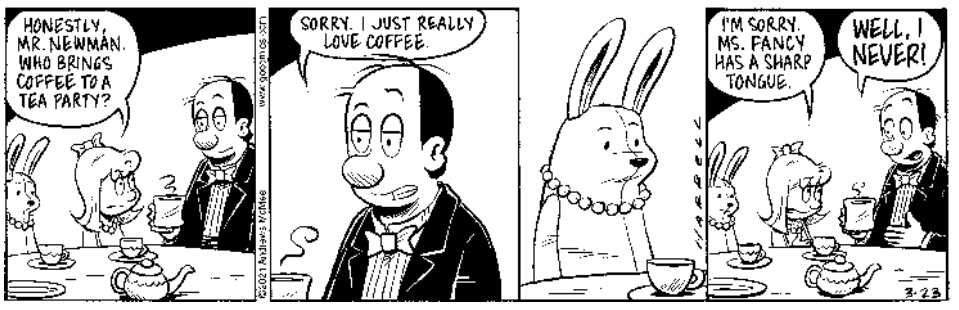

HELLO, MAY I CARRY YOUR BOOKS FOR YOU?
WHY? SO YOU CAN THROW THEM IN A PUDDLE OR SOMETHING? FORGET IT!
I WOULDN'T DO THAT!
YEAH, YOU'D PROBABLY DO SOMETHING WORSE! YOU'RE NOT TOUCHING MY BOOKS, CALVIN!
STRICTLY SPEAKING, I'M NOT CALVIN. I'M THE PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF CALVIN'S GOOD SIDE.
IF THAT WAS TRUE, YOU'D BE A LOT SMALLER.
BOY, HAVE I HEARD THAT JOKE A LOT.
AND IF YOU THINK YOU CAN GET MY BOOKS BY ACTING EVEN WEIRDER THAN USUAL, THINK AGAIN!

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

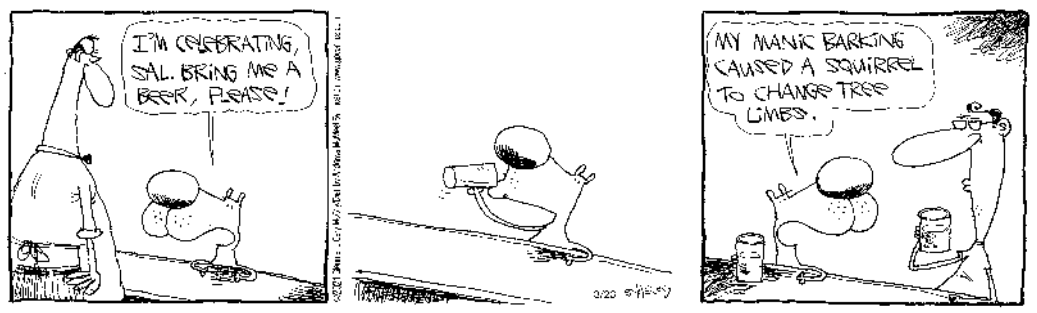
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


HONESTLY, MR. NEWMAN. WHO BRINGS COFFEE TO A TEA PARTY?
SORRY. I JUST REALLY LOVE COFFEE.
I'M SORRY, MS. FANCY HAS A SHARP TONGUE.
WELL, I NEVER!
3-23

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

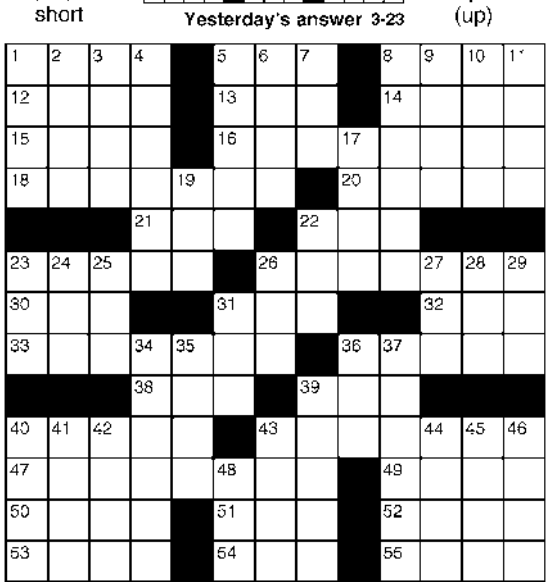
ACROSS
1 Mosque leader
5 Vintage
8 Congers
12 Poet Angelou
13 Stephen of "Still Crazy"
14 Harvest
15 From the U.S.
16 Notorious lover
18 "Sea" that's really a lake
20 Pie variety
21 — Angeles
22 "Certainly!"
23 Ritzy spreads
26 Furniture wheels
30 Moreover
31 Short trip
32 Guitar master Paul
33 Royal residences
36 Packs down
38 Go astray
39 Karaoke prop, for short
40 Spur on
43 Waterfall
47 Skillet makeup
49 Franc replacer
50 Greek vowels
51 Before
52 Ollie's pal
53 RSVP enclosure
54 Animal doc
55 Weeps

DOWN
1 Apple desktop computer
2 Word heard over a baby monitor
3 Pro votes
4 Christie sleuth Jane
5 Killer whales
6 Low-fat
7 "— Kapital"
8 Papa Hemingway
9 Fair-hiring org.
10 Volcanic flow
11 Bridge
17 Tarzan's clique
19 Cyclades island
22 Chatter
23 Lobbying gp.
24 Political strategist Navarro
25 QB's goals
26 Lettuce variety
27 Shade tree
28 Gym unit
29 Snake's warning
31 Coop dweller
34 Dangerous fly
35 Taylor of "Mystic Pizza"
36 "— the season ..."
37 Entry
39 "Olympia" painter Edouard
40 Frozen desserts
41 — Hari
42 Unpaid TV ads
43 Apple center
44 Car
45 Colorless
46 Billions of years
48 Speed (up)

Solution time: 22 mins.

B	E	N	Z	■	P	D	F	■	S	K	Y	S
O	P	I	E	■	O	N	O	■	E	N	O	S
G	I	G	A	■	P	A	Y	S	D	O	W	N
S	C	H	L	E	P	■	T	R	A	W	L	S
■	■	■	O	N	E	S	■	S	T	A	■	■
P	A	R	■	Y	D	I	P	■	E	B	A	N
F	V	F	■	A	U	D	R	A	■	I	I	E
P	I	S	A	■	P	I	F	A	S	F	D	O
■	■	■	C	N	T	■	E	L	A	M	■	■
L	E	N	D	E	R	■	U	S	U	R	P	S
P	L	A	Y	D	E	A	D	■	D	A	T	E
G	A	T	E	■	P	I	E	■	G	M	A	N
A	N	E	T	■	O	R	S	■	E	A	S	T

Yesterday's answer 3-23



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Michelle Monaghan, 45; Keri Russell, 45; Catherine Keener, 62; Chaka Khan, 68.

Happy Birthday: Let your creativity flow this year, and you'll come up with something new and exciting to keep your life interesting. Invent fresh ways to socialize, and share with people as innovative and conscientious as you. Put your heart and soul into improving relationships and taking on a challenge that supports a cause or your community. Pay attention to detail. Your numbers are 5, 11, 22, 24, 31, 40, 44.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Attend a virtual event that offers networking with interesting people. Anger will set in if you sit back instead of taking action. It's up to you to do your part if you want to make a difference or achieve personal growth. ✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Make a change at home that will make your life easier and add to your comfort. Be willing to do the work yourself, and you'll feel good about your accomplishment. Speak up about matters that concern you, and resolve issues swiftly. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Be careful not to lead someone on. Honesty will help you maintain a good rapport with others without jeopardizing your reputation or your integrity. Learn from the experience, and an opportunity will come your way. Work toward self-improvement, not changing others. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Consider what you are trying to achieve, and gather the information that will help you home in on what's required to reach your goal. Don't jeopardize your health in order to advance. Know when to say no or move on and cut your losses. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Improve your life, looks and relationships with others. Concentrate on being the best you can be. Offer kindness, support and understanding to the people around you. A partnership looks promising, and romance is encouraged. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* You'll get help from people who share your concerns. Speak up and do your best to make a positive difference. Anger will solve nothing, but physically taking responsibility will pay off. An offer is useful only if it fulfills a need. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Set out on a pilgrimage that will lead to valuable information. Educational pursuits will open your mind to all sorts of exciting possibilities. Share something special with someone you love, and good things will unfold. A lifestyle change looks promising. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Uncertainty will hold you back. Concentrate on what's entailed to reach your destination and put everything in place. Choose intelligence and reason over anger. A minimalist lifestyle is encouraged if you want to avoid financial setbacks. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Don't be fooled by someone trying to part you from your hard-earned cash. Set ground rules at home or with anyone you share expenses with, and you'll avoid being taken advantage of financially. You cannot buy love or respect. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Refuse to take chances with your health. Make adjustments to the way you live or how you handle your money, and it will ease stress and encourage you to make better decisions regarding associates. Don't neglect what and who's important to you. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Put your energy where it counts, and you'll get good results. Home improvements will encourage you to take better care of yourself and those you love. Don't get angry and let go of the past. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Concentrate on creative ideas and living life your way. Don't get stuck in a rut when making a change will help update your lifestyle to mesh with trends. Reach out to someone you enjoy collaborating with, and you'll get good results. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, imaginative and perceptive. You are aggressive and secretive. ✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		8		1		4	
6		5		3		9	
	4				7		3
8		3					7
	5					2	
9					5		3
	6		7			9	
		1		9		2	8
	3		4		5		

Difficulty Level ★★ 3/23

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

4	9	6	7	5	2	1	8	3
3	1	2	8	9	4	7	5	6
8	7	5	1	3	6	2	9	4
1	5	3	2	4	8	9	6	7
7	6	4	9	1	5	8	3	2
2	8	9	6	7	3	5	4	1
9	3	7	5	6	1	4	2	8
5	4	8	3	2	7	6	1	9
6	2	1	4	8	9	3	7	5

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

GOING VEGAN **Solution: 7 letters**

S	B	S	S	E	T	A	D	S	E	I	T	A	N	S
P	E	E	S	T	U	N	A	E	P	S	M	U	L	P
I	R	L	A	V	O	C	A	D	O	I	P	E	O	I
N	R	P	B	M	R	L	K	Y	S	U	C	T	P	N
A	I	P	L	A	L	E	M	N	O	I	A	E	A	R
C	E	A	D	I	T	I	A	S	R	T	S	L	S	U
H	S	I	T	C	L	E	T	A	O	D	L	A	T	T
T	S	R	H	K	B	U	G	N	E	W	H	E	A	T
H	O	U	E	R	N	U	I	E	K	A	M	M	P	H
T	P	M	E	L	S	O	S	S	V	I	S	N	A	S
D	P	A	A	L	N	I	L	M	L	E	B	R	R	A
T	D	W	E	T	C	I	L	R	A	G	R	O	S	U
S	A	G	S	T	O	R	R	A	C	Y	E	C	N	Q
R	A	I	S	I	N	S	U	M	M	U	H	R	I	S
B	A	N	A	N	A	S	E	M	U	G	E	L	P	Y

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Almond, Apples, Avocado, Bagels, Bananas, Beans, Berries, Breads, Carrots, Cornmeal, Dates, Garlic, Herbs, Hummus, Kemp, Ketchup, Legumes, Lime, Make, Oils, Onion, Parsnip, Pasta, Peanuts, Plums, Potato, Radish, Raisins, Rice, Seeds, Seitan, Soup, Soy Milk, Spelt, Spices, Spinach, Squash, Sugar, Tomato, Tortilla, Turnips, Vegetables, Walnuts, Wheat, Yams

Yesterday's Answer: Cadence

To purchase **THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 45 through 62** order online at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

Rockets drop team-record 20th straight game, falling to OKC

HOUSTON (AP)—The Houston Rockets lost their team-record 20th straight game, falling 114-112 to the Oklahoma City Thunder on Sunday when John Wall missed two shots in the final 10 seconds.

The skid is tied for the ninth-worst in NBA history and the longest since Philadelphia's record-setting 28-game losing streak across the 2014-15 and 2015-16 seasons.

Houston took a 110-109 lead with less than three minutes remaining. After the Rockets went ahead, Lu Dort blocked Wall's layup from behind to protect a 113-112 edge. Wall then missed a deep 3-pointer at the buzzer.

Dort scored 23 points and Isaiah Roby had 18 for the Thunder.

Christian Wood had 27 points, eight rebounds and two blocks for Houston, Wall had 24 points and seven assists, and Victor Oladipo had 23 points.

AP
Oklahoma City Thunder center Moses Brown, middle, reaches for a rebound between, from left, Houston Rockets guard Victor Oladipo (7) center Christian Wood (35), forward Danuel House Jr. (4) and guard John Wall (1) during the second half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, March 21, 2021, in Houston.

Suns 111, Lakers 94

In Phoenix, Devin Booker and Deandre Ayton each had 26 points, Chris Paul had a triple-double with 11 points, 13 assists and 10 rebounds and Phoenix beat LeBron-less Los Angeles.

The Lakers were playing without 17-time All-Star LeBron James for just the second time this season and fell to 0-2 in his absence. James suffered a high ankle sprain in a 99-94 loss to Atlanta on Saturday and is expected to miss significant time.

Montrezl Harrell led the Lakers with 23 points.

Paul became the sixth player in NBA history with 10,000 assists when he threw an alley-oop pass to Ayton for a dunk in the third quarter. The Suns have won 17 of 21.

Nets 113, Wizards 106

In New York, Kyrie Irving scored 28 points and James Harden had 26 to lead Brooklyn past Washington.

Blake Griffin dunked for the first time since December 2019 in his Nets debut and Nicolas Claxton added 16 points, including two three-point plays down the stretch.

Russell Westbrook had 29 points, 13 rebounds and 13 assists for Washington.

Mavericks 132, Trail Blazers 92

In Portland, Ore., Luka Doncic scored 37 points in three quarters, leading to an easy victory over Portland.

Doncic made his first eight 3-point shots and finished 8 of 9. Overall, he shot 13 of 19 from the field and added seven rebounds and four assists.

Josh Richardson added 21 points.

Damian Lillard led Portland with 19 points.

Celtics 112, Magic 96

In Boston, Jaylen Brown hit a career-high 10 3-pointers and scored 34 points, Jayson Tatum added 23 and Boston beat Orlando to snap a three-game losing streak.

The Celtics made 23 3-pointers, one short of the franchise record. Brown was 10 for 18 from the distance.

Nikola Vucevic had 22 points and 13 rebounds for Orlando. The Magic beat Brooklyn on Friday night to snap a nine-game losing streak.

Cavaliers 116, Raptors 105

In Cleveland, Collin Sexton scored 23 of his 36 points in the second half, Jarrett Allen had 17 points and 15 rebounds and Cleveland handed Toronto its eighth straight loss.

Dean Wade scored 16 points, and Darius Garland had 15 points and six assists for Cleveland.. The Cavaliers had dropped five of six.

Fred VanVleet had 23 points and seven assists for Toronto.

76ers 101, Knicks 101, OT

In New York, Tobias Harris made two free throws with 5.3 seconds left in overtime and Philadelphia ran its winning streak against New York to 15 games.

Philadelphia improved to 30-13 with its eighth win in its last 10 games.

Julius Randle scored 24 points, but his last shot rimmed out just before the buzzer as New York dropped to 21-22.

Pelicans 113, Nuggets 108

In Denver, Brandon Ingram and Zion Williamson each scored 30 points and New Orleans' overcame another triple-double by Nikola Jokic to beat Denver.

Nickeil Alexander-Walker added 20 points for the Pelicans.

Jokic had 29 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for his 11 triple-double of the season and 52nd overall.

Pacers 109, Heat 106, OT

In Miami, Justin Holiday scored 15 points and hit consecutive 3-pointers in overtime to lead Indiana past Miami for a series sweep.

Myles Turner had with 16 points and five blocks, Doug McDermott scored 15 points and Domantas Sabonis had 17 points and 11 rebounds for the Pacers.

Bam Adebayo scored 29 points for Miami.

Bulls 100, Pistons 86

In Detroit, Laurie Markkanen had 16 points and eight rebounds and Chicago used a strong defensive performance to beat Detroit.

Zach LaVine scored 18 points for the Bulls

Jerami Grant had 26 points for Detroit.

Raptors' Nurse fined $50,000 for mask-throwing, profanity

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—The NBA has fined Toronto coach Nick Nurse $50,000 for throwing his facemask behind the scorer's table and toward the stands, plus for directing profanity toward game officials before leaving the floor at the end of a game Friday night.

The league announced the fine Sunday.

Nurse was upset at the end of Toronto's 115-112 loss to the Utah Jazz, a game in which the Jazz took 41 free throws, compared with the Raptors' 14.

After the game, Nurse said it "just didn't seem like they were going to let us win tonight," without offering specifics. The 27-shot difference in free throw attempts between the teams was the second largest in the NBA this season, topped by the 28-shot difference Houston had over Golden State on Wednesday.

Entering Sunday, the Raptors were shooting 4.5 free throws per game fewer than opponents this season, the second-largest disparity in the league. Chicago takes 5.0 fewer per game than its opponents.

Source: LaMelo Ball expected to miss rest of season

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—Charlotte Hornets rookie LaMelo Ball is expected to miss the remainder of the NBA season due to a broken right wrist, according to a person familiar with the situation.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on Sunday on condition of anonymity because the team has not made the status of his injury public.

The Hornets said in a release earlier Sunday that Ball had an MRI exam in San Antonio that revealed the injury. The team said he would be listed as out indefinitely.

Ball appeared to be hurt after a fall in the Hornets' 125-98 loss to the Clippers in Los Angeles on Saturday. Ball appeared to be in discomfort playing into the second half.

The point guard was in the midst of a superb season for the Hornets and was a leading candidate for NBA Rookie of the Year honors.

AP
Charlotte Hornets guard LaMelo Ball holds his right wrist during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Los Angeles Clippers Saturday, March 20, 2021, in Los Angeles.

He is averaging 15.9 points and tops all rookies with 6.1 assists and 1.59 steals per game. The No. 3 pick has helped the Hornets into playoff contention in the Eastern Conference, where they sit in eighth place after three straight losses.

The 19-year-old Ball earlier this season became the youngest player in NBA history to record a triple-double. He eventually broke into the starting lineup following an injury to Devonte Graham.

He took over as a starter on Feb. 1 and since that point has averaged 19.5 points, 5.8 rebounds, 6.2 assists and 1.7 steals in his 21 starts while shooting 46.4% from the field and 42.6% from 3-point range.

Hornets owner and NBA great Michael Jordan recently told the AP that he's been impressed by the rookie.

"I think Melo has adjusted to the NBA game better than any of us ever thought this early in his career," Jordan said in an email. "He has exceeded our expectations so far this season."

The third overall pick in the NBA draft, Ball was the first player over the last 60 years to lead all rookies in total points, rebounds, assists and steals at the All-Star Break.

He won back-to-back Eastern Conference rookie of the month honors in January and February.

Buddy Boeheim gets dad back to Sweet 16 as Syracuse tops WVU

AP

Syracuse's Buddy Boeheim (35) ad Marek Dolezaj (21) celebrate following a second-round game against West Virginia in the NCAA men's college basketball tournament at Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Sunday, March 21, 2021, in Indianapolis.

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)— Buddy Boeheim kept shooting, carrying his Hall of Fame father and 11th-seeded Syracuse back into the Sweet 16.

The Orange, a top program for four decades under Jim Boeheim, once again showed they're just as dangerous as an NCAA Tournament afterthought.

"To win two games and be doubted in both, the underdog, this means everything," Buddy Boeheim said. "If you were to ask me a month or two months ago where I think we would be, I don't think I would say Sweet 16, that's for sure."

"Buckets" Boeheim scored 22 of his 25 points after halftime to lead the Orange past third-seeded West Virginia 75-72 on Sunday. Syracuse (18-9) advanced to face second-seeded Houston in a Midwest Regional semifinal.

The Orange were a bubble team this year, a familiar spot of late. They won their last two regular-season games and once in the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament to sneak into the field.

Now they're heading to Jim Boeheim's 20th Sweet 16, thanks to his 6-foot-6, sweet-shooting son.

"I mean, he's just been playing great," Jim said. "He's been putting the ball on the floor and getting his own shot. Teammates have been looking for him.

"He had some really good looks today. He was 6 for 13 (on 3-pointers). I'm surprised he wasn't 10 for 13, really, the way he's been shooting it. And I know he was disappointed in himself at halftime, but he showed kind of what he's made of."

The Orange moved on at the expense of another coaching legend, Bob Huggins, in the second March Madness meeting between coaches with at least 900 Division I victories. Huggins won No. 900 when West Virginia beat Morehead State in the first round on Friday. Boeheim got his 982nd at Huggins' expense.

Buddy Boeheim made two straight 3s just after halftime. His jumper and 3 on consecutive possessions put Syracuse ahead 63-59 with 4:55 left, and he helped put the game away with three late free throws.

After his quiet first half, Boeheim got a pep talk from former Orange sharpshooter Gerry McNamara, who won the 2003 national championship as Carmelo Anthony's wingman and is now one of Jim Boeheim's assistants.

"G-Mac just came up to me at halftime and said, 'Keep going. I don't care if you miss 200. Just keep shooting,'" Boeheim said. "I just said, all right, if I get clean looks, I'm going to have to take them and I'm going to start making them."

Sean McNeil scored 23 points to lead the Mountaineers (19-10), who last made the Sweet 16 in 2018. That was the fifth time West Virginia got that far under Huggins, who also made the regional semis four times with Cincinnati.

WVU trailed 74-72 with 4 seconds left before Boeheim was fouled at midcourt on an inbounds pass. He made one free throw and missed the second, but Miles McBride traveled after grabbing the rebound.

The Mountaineers dug an early hole and briefly took the lead back in the second half. But Boeheim kept answering with big shots.

"They shot it extremely well," Huggins said. "It seemed like everything they shot went in, and they shot from deep. We wanted to make them bounce it and we let them get too many step-in shots."

Joe Girard scored all 12 of his points before halftime, steadying the Orange while Boeheim struggled. Quincy Guerrier and Marek Dolezaj also scored 12 each for Syracuse. Loyola Chicago, Sister Jean get past Illinois, into Sweet 16

Loyola Chicago 71, Illinois 58

In Indianapolis, Loyola Chicago carried out 101-year-old superfan Sister Jean's plans to a T on Sunday, moving to the Sweet 16 with a 71-58 win over Illinois, the first No. 1 seed bounced from this year's NCAA Tournament.

Cameron Krutwig delivered a 19-point, 12-rebound masterpiece and the quick-handed, eighth-seeded Ramblers (26-4) led wire to wire. They befuddled a powerful Illinois offense to return to the second weekend three years after their last magical run to the Final Four.

The Ramblers will next play No. 12 seed Oregon State in a Midwest Regional semifinal.

Their 2018 trip to the Final Four was headlined by Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt, the venerable team chaplain, who received both COVID-19 vaccination shots and clearance to travel to Indianapolis to see what inspiration she could provide in 2021. Jean delivered a pregame prayer that could've been stripped straight from a John Wooden handbook.

Illinois (24-7) earned top seeding for the first time since its own Final Four run in 2005, but fell behind by double digits in the first half and never got within striking range. The Illini committed 16 turnovers and scored 23 points fewer than their season average.

Illinois' 7-foot second-team All-American Kofi Cockburn finished with 21 points on 7-for-12 shooting, but worked hard for every shot.

And Loyola's handsy guards, Lucas Williamson and Keith Clemons, kept first-team All-American Ayo Dosunmu from ever finding his comfort zone. He finished with nine points, 11 under his season average.

Oregon State 80, Oklahoma State 70

In Indianapolis, Ethan Thompson scored 26 points and Oregon State neutralized Oklahoma State and star freshman Cade Cunningham, rolling to an 80-70 upset.

Maurice Calloo, who transferred from Oklahoma State, scored 15 points and Jarod Lucas also had 15 for the 12th-seeded Beavers.

Cunningham, a first-team All-American and possible top NBA draft pick, scored 24 points for Oklahoma State (21-9), but the fourth-seeded Cowboys wasted possessions down the stretch by failing to get him the ball.

Avery Anderson scored 16 points and Keylan Boone added 13 for Oklahoma State in a game that was delayed for 20 minutes at the start by a power outage.

Oregon State (19-12) became the third double-digit seed to reach this year's Sweet 16, joining 15 seed Oral Roberts and Syracuse, an 11.

Houston 63, Rutgers 60

In Indianapolis, Quentin Grimes scored 22 points, Tramon Mark converted a soaring three-point play with 24 seconds left, and Houston beat Rutgers.

DaJon Jarreau overcame a series of bumps and bruises to score a key bucket down the stretch and finished with 17 points for second-seeded Houston (26-3).

The 10th-seeded Scarlet Knights (16-12) still had a chance after Mark's free throws, but Geo Baker turned the ball over and Marcus Sasser made two more to extend the lead. Rutgers rushed back up the floor and Ron Harper Jr. let fly a potential tying 3 from the wing that clanked off the side of the rim as the final buzzer sounded.

Baker finished with 14 points for Rutgers but was holding back tears following his late turnover. Montez Mathis also had 10 points for the Scarlet Knights, who failed to advance to the Sweet 16 for the first time since 1976.

SOUTH

Baylor 76, Wisconsin 63

In Indianapolis, Davion Mitchell scored 16 points and spearheaded a dominant defensive first half, helping top-seeded Baylor avoid another NCAA Tournament upset with a 76-63 win over Wisconsin on Sunday.

Not long after Illinois became the first No. 1 seed to bow out, the Bears (24-2) looked every bit a Final Four favorite in the first half, smothering Wisconsin with the type of defensive pressure they played before a late-season COVID-19 pause.

The Badgers (18-13) showed a bit of fight after being backed into an 18-point corner, rallying to within seven midway through the second half behind D'Mitrik Trice (12 points).

The Bears answered the run with a dash of more D to reach the Sweet 16 for the fifth time under coach Scott Drew. They'll face fifth-seeded Villanova.

Villanova 84, North Texas 61

In Indianapolis, Jeremiah Robinson-Earl scored 18 points, Jermaine Samuels Jr. had 15 and Villanova knocked down 15 3-pointers, emphatically ending 13th-seeded North Texas' bid for a second upset.

Villanova (18-6) will play the second weekend of the tournament for the third time in the last five. Coach Jay Wright's team won the whole thing the last two times it got this far in 2016 and '18.

These Wildcats are not considered a serious national championship contender — but they seemed to channel those title teams in the first half against the Conference USA champions at Bankers Life Fieldhouse.

Villanova finished 15 for 30 from 3-point range, with Cole Swider (nine points) and Caleb Daniels (11 points) each hitting three.

Javion Hamlet scored 25 points on 8-of-16 shooting, but the rest of the Mean Green (18-10) made only 13 field goals.

Arkansas 68, Texas Tech 66

In Indianapolis, Justin Smith had 20 points and played a key role in a final-play defensive stop, helping Arkansas beat Texas Tech and secure the program's first trip to the Sweet 16 in a quarter-century.

In the final seconds of a tense finish, Smith found himself defending Kyler Edwards beyond the 3-point arc. Edwards drove into the paint with Smith on his hip and missed a layup, with Arkansas guard JD Notae snagging the rebound and sprinting up court to run the final seconds out.

The third-seeded Razorbacks are off to the regional semifinals for the first time since 1996 under famed former coach Nolan Richardson. Arkansas (24-6) next faces No. 15 seed Oral Roberts.

Star freshman Moses Moody had 11 of his 15 points after halftime for the Razorbacks, who led by 13 points only to have the sixth-seeded Red Raiders twice whittle that margin to a single point.

Terrence Shannon Jr. scored 20 points for Texas Tech (18-11).

Oral Roberts 81, Florida 78

In Indianapolis, Oral Roberts became just the second No. 15 seed in NCAA Tournament history to advance to the round of 16, sending No. 7 seed Florida home.

Oral Roberts opened the tournament by stunning No. 2 seed Ohio State.

Kevin Obanor and Max Abmas carried the Golden Eagles out of an 11-point deficit. Obanor scored 28 points and Abmas, the regular season national leading scorer, finished with 26 as the Golden Eagles (18-10) closed the game on a 25-11 run to overcome the 11-point lead Florida held with less than 10 minutes remaining.

Oral Roberts joins Florida Gulf Coast—those guys from Dunk City—as the only No. 15 seeds to reach the round of 16.

Tre Mann led the Gators (15-10) with 19 points, but went quiet late in the second half, failing to score over the final 17 minutes.

Chamber golf tournament set on May 22

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce's Two-Man Scramble Scholarship Golf Tournament is set for Saturday, May 22, 2021, at the Lao Lao Bay Golf & Resort west course.

The annual fundraising event provides financial support for the Saipan Chamber Scholarship Program, which awards local students seeking higher education to better contribute to our community.

Men and women of different skill levels will have a chance at amazing cash prizes: first place, $800; second place, $650; and third place, $500 for two categories: Team Gross and Team Double Peoria. Add a little competition with Optional Play Contests for a chance to win $150 in cash prizes per contest. Golfers will also enjoy complimentary swag bags courtesy of our Chamber members, on-course snacks and refreshments, and post-tournament refreshments.

The tournament is scheduled for Saturday, May 22, 2021, with showtime at 6am and a shotgun start at 7am. The registration fee for general public is $120/per person ($140 after May 7). Chamber members and their scramble partners will enjoy a discounted rate of $110/member ($130 after May 7). Tickets for amazing raffle prizes are available for purchase during registration and throughout the tournament. Save time and money when you sign up before May 7th with an additional $10 off the Optional Play Contest!

Registration forms for players are available for download at www.saipanchamber.com/events, Lao Lao Bay Golf & Resort (front desk) and the Saipan Chamber of Commerce Office located at the Marianas Business Plaza, 4th Floor, Suite 413 (Blue Door). SCC encourages golfers to submit their forms and fees before May 14th at the Chamber Office, where registrants can easily pay for registration, raffle tickets, and optional play contests before the tournament to ease their day-of check-in and help promote social-distancing measures.

The Chamber has implemented COVID-19 procedures to ensure the safety of golfers, which includes issuing pre-tournament registrations packets to alleviate crowding the morning of the tournament. Full COVID-19 procedures can be found in the registration form.

For more information about the event or the Chamber, visit the Chamber's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/saipanchamber, visit our office in the Marianas Business Plaza Room #413 (Susupe), or contact Franco Santos at coordinator@saipanchamber.com or call our office at (670) 234-7150. ***(PR)***

KURODA

From Page 20

Aquathlon among 13 individuals in the Female Division.

Myers has been an avid, consistent podium finisher in run events and is now venturing into multi- sports.

NMSA also named a male student athlete of the month, Marianas High School's Isaiah Aleksenko.

Aleksenko is a formidable swimmer and started to venture into triathlon, he was even the youngest male participant during the last aquathlon event last month.

Aleksenko emerged first on the swim portion and landed silver medal by outpacing eleven adults and is one of the two participants who finished under the one-hour mark at 57:22 along with Kuroda who finished in 56.19.

KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA

The Mount Carmel School boys volleyball team are named the Northern Marianas Sports Association Team of the Month for the month of February after they coasted to victory in the 2020-2021 Public School System Interscholastic 4×4 Beach Volleyball League at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan sand court back in February.

NMSA's Female Student-Athlete of the month was Andrei Kaithlyn Chavez of Mount Carmel School.

At just 15 years old, the middle school student is an active athlete and has proven a worth competitor in swimming, biking, and running.

The young athlete came out on top in the 6th Aquathlon event where she conquered 14 female adults and placed 6th overall among 27 participants by registering 1:07:53.

Chavez is a back-to-back winner of Triathlon Association of the CNMI hosted events, also taking first place in the Saipan Duathlon.

NMSA recognized Chavez's constant hunger for improvement and as well as her respectful nature toward peers and officials.

Meanwhile, NMSA awarded the NMSA Team of the Month to MCS' Boys Beach Volleyball Team composed of Richard Steele, Merrick Toves, Jeremiah Diaz, Brandon Lee, Jun Beom Kim, and Sam (Ji Hwan) Ryu.

The team went 9-0 in the pool play rounds over two weeks and did not lose a match in the double-elimination tournament.

The team's only loss was the first set against Grace Christian Academy in the best 2-out-of-3 championship match.

MCS was unbeaten the entire season and championship tournament, earning them a perfect season record in addition to being the 2021 PSS Boys High School 4V4 Beach Volleyball Champions.

Little League election April 10

The Saipan Little League Baseball, Inc. will be holding a meeting and election on April 10.

SLLB is calling all managers, coaches, volunteers, and other interested individuals and groups to attend the meeting and election set for 10am at the conference room of the Department of Public Works' Grounds and Transportation office in Lower Base.

For more information, contact Mike Borja at 483-2526, Piding Tenorio at 285-1024, and Annie Flores at 285-1219. ***(PR)***

Rockets drop team-record 20th straight game, falling to OKC
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Sports

Buddy Boeheim gets dad back to Sweet 16 as Syracuse tops WVU
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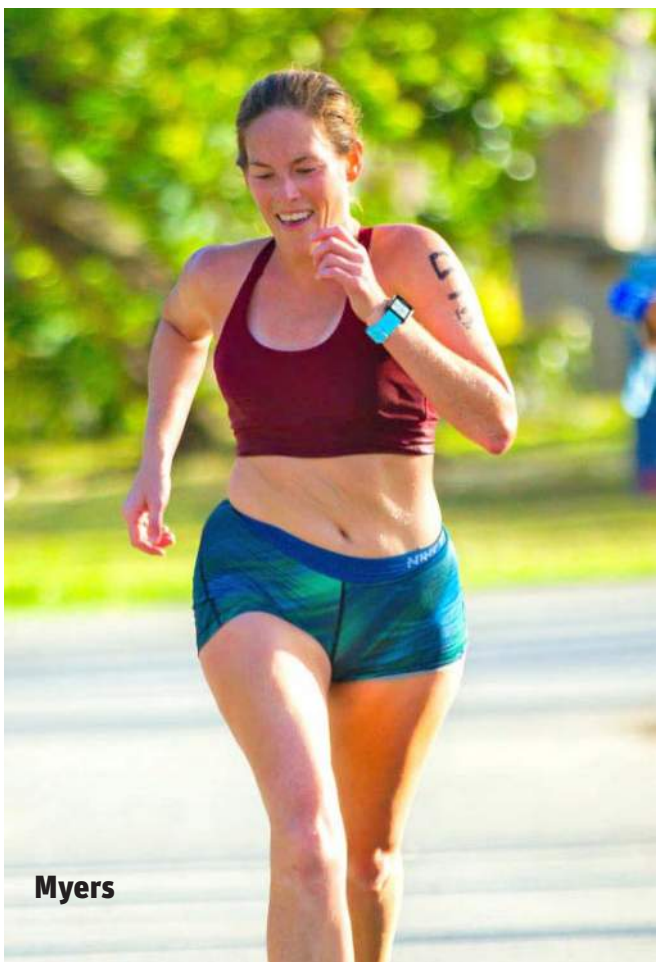
Kuroda, Myers named athletes of the month

Kuroda



Myers

Aleksenko

Chavez

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Sports Association has named Shuji Kuroda and Denise Myers the male and female athletes of the month, respectively, for the month of February.

» Aleksenko, Chavez win student awards

According to NMSA, the choice for February athletes of the month was based off of highlight events like the 6th Aquathlon held at Pau Pau Beach and the 2020-2021 Public School System Interscholastic 4v4 Beach Volleyball League Championships held at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan sand court.

Kuroda, Food and Beverage assistant manager at Grandvrio Saipan, was chosen as the NMSA Male Athlete of the month after he took first place in the 6th Saipan Aquathlon 5-kilometer run, 1-km swim, and 2.5-km run held last Feb. 27 at Pau Pau Beach.

Kuroda has been a consistent finisher and was a runner-up in last year's event. His continuous training and dedication to various sporting events across the CNMI resulted in a huge improvement as displayed during off- road/road duathlon and recently, the 6th Saipan Aquathlon.

Kuroda has also proven to be friendly, respectful, and courteous to all his peers.

Myers, a health and physical education instructor for the Northern Marianas College, was chosen as NMSA's Female Athlete of the Month after placing second in the 6th Saipan

See KURODA on Page 19

KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA

Department of Land and Natural Resource Secretary Anthony "Tony" Benavente, second from the right, poses for a photo after topping foes in the Senior Flight of the Northern Marianas College's 16th Annual Foundation Golf Tournament held last Saturday at the east course of the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort.

DLNR chief rules Senior Flight

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Department of Lands and Natural Resource Secretary Anthony "Tony" Benavente hit a 2-over-par 74 to top the Senior Flight of the Northern Marianas College's 16th Annual Foundation Golf Tournament held last Saturday at the east course of the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort.

The NMSA Hall of Famer, who has participated in the annual golf tourney for the past 16 years, bagged his first ever win after scoring a 2-under par 34 in the front nine and a 4-over par 40 in the back to finish with a gross score of 74.

Benavente received a $500 cash prize to go with his newly acquired title.

The highlight of Benavente's game was when he eagled the par-5, 472-yard, hole No. 3 followed by two birdies in par-3, hole No. 4 and par-4, hole No. 5.

"Everything turned out well in my game and eventually with the eagle, birdie, and birdie, it brought down my score and finished with a 74 to win the Senior Flight," he said.

Benavente said it was a lucky day and despite the heat, the tournament turned out to be a great success.

"It was truly a great game today. It was hot and a long wait but this was a beautiful tournament, and we wish for it to continue on to the future," he said.

Benavente added that his win was a mix of sheer luck and effort, stating that he tried his best and it paid off in the end.

Meanwhile, additional awards given out last Saturday were the closest to the pin awards. NMC awarded Gov. Ralph DLG Torres the award after getting 7 feet 6 inches close in the par-3 hole No. 11. Also earning KP awards for hole No. 11 were Joe Tudela who came 16. 9 feet close and Tars Olopai who came in 39 feet and 4 inches close.

Jerome Sablan, Marco Peter, Sylvio Ada, and Aaron Benavente also received closest to the pin awards for hole No. 8.

For hole No. 6, Gilah Yoon received the closest to the pin award for getting 6 feet 7 inches close to the pin followed by John San Nicolas at 22 feet. Joey Dela Cruz came within 23 feet and 8 inches, closely followed by Jim Arenovski who came within 23 feet and 11 inches.

Gilah Yoon also came closest to the pin in hole No. 4 at 2 feet followed by Freddie Cataluna who came in 2.8 feet close.